

# Blurred Kaleidoscope

by lunar9ueen

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Summary: She would never love her cold and somewhat heartless husband, whom she married due to political safety reason. But was it the only reason of their arranged marriage? Or was there something else lurking behind the shadow? She didn't knowâ€"yet.

## 1. Prologue

**\*\*Hello guys! Thank you for stopping by! ^\_^^\*\***

**\*\*Hehe, for those who hasn't known me yet, I'm lunar9ueen, a shipper of tear-jerking stories and Saito x Chizuru pairing. I can't get enough of this cute couple O\_O I don't understand why this couple doesn't develop well in Hakuouki fandom...Well, that's people's choice. I can't do anything about that XD All I can do is making more stories for them! They deserve more attention! And honestly it's hard for me to imagine any other girl being with Saito but Chizuru...\*\***

**\*\*Enough rambling. Anyway, a bit of quick explanation: In this story, Shinsengumi works for Aizu and Shogunate as shown on anime and games~ but I decided Satsuma-Choshu (Satcho) has been an alliance since the beginning to make it simple, because I don't want to include too much politic here. And they works for Emperor.\*\***

**\*\*As the chapter's title said, it's the prologue~ but it will be filled with important clues that leading to the main story XD\*\***

**\*\*Ugh...and I've always put this warning everytime I start a new series...English is not my first language, so forgive me if you find some mistakes. But I've tried my best in English :O After all, I use other people's language and I have to respect it, ne? ^\_^^\*\***

**\*\*Let's enjoy the first chapter of my third Saito x Chizuru series!  
^\_^^\*\***

\* \* \*

><p><strong>BLURRED KALEIDOSCOPE<strong>

CHAPTER 1: PROLOGUE

\* \* \*

><p>"Father! Mother!"<p>

Red, orange, and yellow shades were dancing together, leaving a great shock in Chizuru's widened eyes as she stared at her house which was burning in ferocious fire.

She didn't know why such terrible thing could happen. Her mother asked her to buy some food supply in the nearest town this morning, just like usual. Even she could still remember her parents' gentle smiles when they told her to be careful and not coming home late. Yet tonight, instead of warm dinner, what welcomed her home was only the crimson flames, licking and breaking down a house that used to be the place where she had grown up.

Not wanting to lose any seconds, Chizuru ran towards the door. There was no time to worry about how high the temperature was, or that the heat was even more tormenting inside. A painful cough escaped her throat when the black cruel smoke started to suffocate her. Yet she kept moving forward, didn't give a crap about it.

If her parents were truly trapped, she was the only one who could save them. They lived alone, far from humanity. That meant there was not even a single neighbor who could give her a hand.

The reason why they chose to live in such lonely place? Well, it was because they were not an ordinary family...

...Even so, they were happy, at least until this tragedy occurred.

"Father! Where are you?! Mother! Please answer me!"

Screaming in desperation until her throat refused to produce any voice, Chizuru managed to avoid some scorching wood that almost smashed her small body into pieces.

Breathing was already difficult. Inhale. Exhale. Blurred. Her sight was getting blurred while the smoke began to fill her lungs and the fire gave some painful burn on her skin.

She almost collapsed due to breathing difficulty, fear, and exhaustion...and almost surrendered when she found out that the entrance door had been blocked by cruel flames. But suddenly, between her already subconscious mind, she saw her parents, laying down in the middle of fire.

Not having strength to even shout a single word anymore, immediately Chizuru headed towards the only precious people for her. She had to save them. Maybe they just lost consciousness due to lack of oxygen or terrifying heat...

Sadly, it was not the case. Chizuru slapped herself and didn't want to believe her eyes upon looking at her father and mother, laying on a pool of blood, surrounded by vicious flare.

Lifeless. Dead.

"NOOO!" She heard her own voice and her rough breathing, whistling like a broken melody. And as if the worst luck was mocking her, a wooden block crashed down between the girl and her beloved parents, separating them apart forever.

Chizuru fell on her knees, tears rolling down her cheeks. How would she was supposed to live now? Silently wishing the fire to bring her along with her parents, suddenly realization hit her...

...Right. There was great amount of blood in this supposedly peaceful place. And of course, it meant fire was\_ not\_ the cause of her parents' death.

Perhaps destiny was too cruel, or too kind, because it answered her silent question as soon as it appeared. As she inhaled enough carbon dioxide within the burning place, abruptly she saw a shadowâ€"resembling a man, walking steadily behind her parents' corpse as though nothing happened.

"Who...are you?"

Against her will, Chizuru's eyes fluttering shut. She couldn't breathe nor walk, yet that shadow passed the scorching wooden block, approached her on purposeâ€"or so it seemed.

And that sword in his hand, dripping a terrifying amount of fresh scarlet blood.

"You..." Chizuru let out a cough while trying to maintain her consciousness, though it didn't give a positive result. All was blurred, but she could still give that mysterious figure a glare as he went even closer to her.

"You're the one who murdered my parents, aren't you?"

But that was the last thing she managed to speak as her soul betrayed her by falling asleep in this critical moment. There was no answer either from the figure, and Chizuru didn't know what he would do upon facing a defenseless maiden. Such a bastard would surely do something bad after burning down her house and killing her family.

All that hatred slept within her weak body. Still, before she fully closed her eyes, she managed to see something important, a characteristic that she would never forget in life...

...That bloody katana. He wielded that cursed thing in his\_ left\_ hand.

\* \* \*

><p>"So, she's that famous Yukimura heiress?"<p>

"The last pureblood female oni, huh?"

"...She seems like a normal girl to me."

\* \* \*

><p><em>Where...am...I?<em>

\* \* \*

><p>In a very weak movement, Chizuru opened her watery eyes. She smelt unpleasant burnt aroma from her torn kimono, and felt how difficult breathing was in her current condition.<p>

Attempting to get up and speak, the girl was not able to do anything. The only thing she noticed was, she was laying on a thin bed in a dimmed-light room, while some weird people looking at her in curiosity as if she was a rare animal or such.

Repeated words like 'female pureblood oni', or 'the daughter of Yukimura family' from them was replaying over and over again like a chant, both in the reality or within her hazy mind...she didn't know anymore.

"Humans, don't you dare to lay your filthy hands on her."

All of a sudden, Chizuru saw a blurred shadow of a giant man, which revealing itself as a gigantic red-haired man. Behind him, there was another man holding a gun and a bald old man, who had the most normal look between the trio.

"A-Amagiri-sama..." One of the men who surrounded Chizuru before gulped as he let the newcomers to replace his place. The same went for the rest. It looked like they were ones of respected people here.

However, Chizuru could just glimpsed at them with her dull brown eyes. Her lips refused to say any word, and her limbs had betrayed her as well. Only her eyes that could "somewhat say something unclear through the pearls of tears.

"Well, Kodo." The man with gun shrugged as he turned his eyes away from Chizuru to the oldest man. "You'd better heal her quickly, or else Kazama would kill us all upon seeing his bride's condition."

\* \* \*

><p><em>...What is he saying? Bride?<em>

\* \* \*

><p>The man called Kodo bent down and examined Chizuru's eyes "that looked empty without the radiance of life. Although Chizuru could only lay down helplessly, she could tell that a father-like calming smile lined Kodo's lips.<p>

After several minutes of examination, Kodo stood up and glanced at the two men, "Amagiri-sama, Shiranui-sama, her condition will take a while to heal. She inhaled too much smoke and not to mention, some burn wounds. Probably she suffers from the shock too."

A nonchalant sigh was given as an answer by Shiranui, as the said man

stared at the bunch of trembling people who surrounded Chizuru before, whom he called a group of 'humans.'

"Are you sure you're not the one who almost killed her? Do you know how precious she is?" Shiranui gave them a death glare while asking.

"Of course not!" A man answered Shiranui's question—or threat, in wavering tone. "We just came to ask Yukimura family to join our force by Kazama-sama's order, like always! But what we've found there was a burning house with that girl laying unconsciously outside!"

A shot of pain struck Chizuru's brain. How could she was outside the house?

"Yukimura family..." Amagiri muttered quietly, more to himself. "They were pureblood, yet they chose to live in peace. What a waste...for their lives to end that way."

Tears falling down Chizuru's cheeks upon listening to it. Yes, now she was all alone. And the reason why her family wanted to live in a lonely place was because they refused to join the war. As long as Chizuru knew, oni was a secret existence, only a few people knew about them.

She remembered the story told by her parents about a long war that had happened in Japan, especially Kyoto. The worried townspeople always talked about that as well everytime she went out to the town. War, war, and war, the endless topic which leading to an unknown future.

Aizu and Satsuma-Choshu alliance, or known as Satcho. Two biggest clans that had been always fighting like there was no tomorrow. While Aizu Clan supported the Shogunate, Satcho wanted to make the Emperor as the only government. This difference of faith had killed many victims without any clear result.

And demons, or oni...Chizuru knew that her kind could only be counted by fingers in this era. But she also heard that some oni had given a hand to Satcho Clan due to their great help for the ancestors of demons, when oni and humans were fighting against each other. It was a very long time ago, Chizuru didn't know the details...

...Still, she knew that Yukimura family, one of pureblood clans left, had refused to join the war because of their belief that bloodshed wouldn't solve any problems. And even though her parents never told her, she knew that sometimes some people—most likely from Satcho, often came and invited her family to join the force.

Sometimes, she thought that her beloved father and mother told her to go to the town on purpose, because they didn't want Chizuru to meet those strangers. But several times, when she came back early, she often saw them from a far, leaving their house. And judging by her parents' stern expression, all of her deductions would fit.

Probably, she was in Satcho Headquarters right now...one of the men before said they came to her house like always, just to see a burning house, ordered by someone named...

...Kazama?

A flash of memories invaded her mind ruthlessly, making her want to howl from being afraid of losing herself. Still, there was no voice came out. The shock and sorrow were too much for her frail heart to bear.

"Relax, relax..." Chizuru felt Kodo wiping off the cold sweat from her forehead. "I know it's not easy to have both of your parents passed away at once."

Inhale. Exhale. Painfully and heavily. Finally after some moments that seemed like eternity, Chizuru's lips parted open and managed to speak out an almost inaudible whisper.

"They were killed...by...you?"

For a second, a thought that Satcho was the one who killed her parents crossed her dizzy mind. Maybe they were tired already of Yukimura family's continuous refusals.

Upon hearing her question, Amagiri sighed slightly before answering, "We are demons, we're not like humans who would kill their own kind. And to think that the victims were pureblood family, it's impossible to put the blame on us. Pureblood is highly respected. We would never do such low thing like killing them."

Chizuru gulped, still laying on the bed. Amagiri was right, pureblood demons were rare existence and there was no way another demon could kill them. But abruptly she noticed something in Amagiri's previous words. Her eyes widened a bit as her throat generated another shaking whisper, "...Are you...demons?"

A proud smirk played on Shiranui's face while pointing his finger to himself, Amagiri, and Kodo, "Well, just three of us, although not a pureblood like you." But all of a sudden, a disgusted expression replaced the smirk as he turned his eyes to the rest of trembling men, "And they are low creatures we call as humans. Too bad we have to work with them just because of their kindness in the past. Like hell actually I wanted to join this bunch of dogs!"

"Shiranui," Amagiri cut his comrade's speech while gazing sharply at him. Shiranui just let out a '\_tch\_' as response. It was obvious he didn't feel comfortable working together with humans.

The young maiden couldn't think of anything more. Her mind was too blank, her heart hurt like it wanted to vanish and let her body empty, only leaving a flash of left-handed figure who most likely was her parents' murderer...Probably if she joined the Satcho, they would help her to find this bastard? After all, she had nobody left and Satcho Clan would surely treat her well after helping, or bringing her along with them...But such thing would betray her parents' wish, who always thought that war could never bring any good solution.

She almost lost herself. She didn't have any destination in life, as she could only see a foggy dark path ahead. Yet Kodo noticed that and stroked her hair, telling her to calm down in silence.

"Speaking of which...", Amagiri looked at his surrounding, "Where is Kazama?"

"Who knows?" Shiranui answered nonchalantly, "Maybe he just went out to get some fresh air? Although it's too bad that he was not here to welcome his bride."

Again. Another 'Kazama' and 'bride' thing. Just what were they saying? This headache tortured Chizuru even more.

"Kazama-sama is..." As an answer to her silent question, Kodo was willing to explain to her. Chizuru was grateful to him. It looked like he was the only one who actually did care about her. "...the lord of oni, a rare pureblood like you. He has always wanted your family to join us. And when he knew that they have a daughter, he wanted to take you as his wife. Two purebloods united as one would produce an even stronger heir..."

Upon seeing a worried and confused expression on Chizuru's face, Kodo attempted to calm her down, "Don't worry, Kazama-sama is a kind person. He's going to be a good husband andâ€"

"Kodo." Suddenly Amagiri let out a stern voice, "You're not good at pretending."

As Amagiri continued his words, Chizuru swore that Kodo's face turning pale.

"Speaking of pretending, Kodo...I've heard a bad rumor about you."

Trying to stay calm, Kodo was about to retort. But Shiranui's next words had silenced the old man.

"Oh, that rumor? Even I know about it." Shiranui furrowed his eyebrows as he spoke, "I heard you're actually working for Aizu Clan as well. Perhaps your status as a rare doctor trained in western medicine has taken their interest to include you in their secret project? I once heard that they wanted to make a kind of idiot corps that could rival the oni's power."

"O-of course it's not true!" Kodo stuttered, though for Chizuru, Shiranui's monologue had hit the bull's eye. Kodo looked even more uneasy when the two demons looking straight at him in suspicion.

Shiranui shrugged and walked away from Kodo, "Well, we still don't have any proof. But if it's true, Kodo...you know what Kazama might do to you, right?"

The doctor couldn't say anything to object. Yet he must say thanks to Chizuru, who didn't understand about their rambling. Instead, she kept thinking about her murdered parents and succeeded in changing the topic that cornered Kodo without her realizing it.

"...Do you have any idea about the person...who most likely has killed my parents...?"

"Like hell we know!" Shiranui shouted in annoyed tone. Obviously he was actually not interested in babysitting a wounded and traumatic girl, just if she was not a rare pureblood female oni.

But as soon as realization hit him, Shiranui gave it a deep thought, "Wait...could it be?"

"Someone from Aizu Clan," Amagiri closed his eyes as he was thinking of the same thing, "It's the most logical explanation. Perhaps they knew about Yukimura family's existence and decided to annihilate them, not even knowing that they're not the ones of Satcho soldiers...Or they just wanted to kill all demons without any exception."

"But who else knows about demons' existence? I thought nobody knew about us outside Satcho!" Shiranui questioned in bewilderment and slight anger.

"Ever heard of the Aizu's elite force?"

"You meant the new stupid group formed not too long ago?"

"Yes...I heard they have several secrets, and were supposed to hold Aizu's most dangerous missions. But I'm not sure yet, since we're lacking proofs."

"If I'm correct, their official name is Shinsenâ€"something."

"Shinsengumi."

While the two comrades talking to each other, Chizuru's brain kept spinning as if it wanted to explode. Just who on earth killed her parents? She just wanted to know about that. She wanted to listen to the exact answer, not just a foggy prediction. At first, she thought it was Satcho, and now they said it most likely the Aizu Clan. Both deductions had no proof...She didn't know what to believe anymore. Perhaps the culprit was just a mere group of thieves? Ah, she was too exhausted to even think. It was better for her to follow her parents to another world.

"Amagiri-sama, Shiranui-sama." Kodo let out a voice upon realizing that the demons' conversation had tormented the frail maiden without them knowing it. "Can you leave us alone? As a doctor, I could tell that my patient needs silence and relaxing atmosphere to completely heal."

The doctor tried to keep smiling as Amagiri and Shiranui stared at him. But upon looking at Chizuru's condition, they understood that they had no choice but to follow Kodo's order. Quietly, they stepped out of the room with the Satcho men behind them.

"Kodo..." As he walked, Amagiri spoke in a low voice, "I hope the rumor about you being a double agent is not true."

Kodo's face turned pale once again. But thanks to Shiranui, who said something like 'Who cares about that? Just make sure that girl is already in one piece when Kazama comes back!', the doctor didn't have to answer.

Waiting for the group's footsteps to completely fade away, Kodo finally could keep calm. He smiled to Chizuru while mixing the medicines right besides her bed.



"What's your name?"

Chizuru let out a cough before answering weakly,  
"Yukimura...Chizuru..."

The smile didn't leave the old man's lips. After boiling the medicine, he poured it into a cup and helped Chizuru to get up.

"Chizuru...as they said, I'm not good at pretending," Kodo positioned the cup on Chizuru's hands and helped her to drink it. Suddenly, a comforting warmth flew into her body. She was so grateful to this kind doctor, who somehow reminded her of her late father.

Feeling that half of her strength had returned within her body, Chizuru managed to speak more clearly than before, "What do you mean, Doctor?"

However, Kodo shook his head, "No need to be formal. We're still relatives. While your family is the main branch, I'm from the lesser one. That's why I'm not a pureblood...Still, I have the same faith as your father and mother...Though maybe, theirs are much stronger than mine."

Chizuru listened to each word closely, even though it was hard to trust. But she didn't have anyone now...and this old man was the only person who treated her nicely. This dilemma almost made her going insane.

Yukimura Kodo gave her a serious look as he explained more, "Listen, Chizuru...I know it's difficult for you since you just had a very unpleasant experience. But what they said before about me is true...I'm actually working for Aizu. I'm their spy here, regardless I'm an oni who's supposed to work for Satcho. Call me a traitor, or whatever you want, but the only thing I can tell you right now is, this place is not where we belong."

Taking a deep breath, Kodo carried out his next words, "I'm in the charge of Aizu's secret project called 'Ochimizu'...I will explain all of these crazy things to you later. It's a cruel thing but its existence is necessary. Now Amagiri-sama and Shiranui-sama are already suspicious, I don't have any choice but to leave this place as soon as possible."

"...Why did you tell me all of these?"

Upon hearing the confused girl's sudden question, Kodo looked even more serious as if a heavy weight was burdened on his shoulder, "Because I will be your father from this day onwards. After all, we're still a family...I just can't let you fall to Kazama-sama's hand. He's a sly and cruel demon. He despises humans though he also works with Satcho. Maybe his presence was also the reason why your parents refused to join Satcho..."

So, even there was internal conflict within the demons themselves. This thought made the guess that perhaps the murderer was someone from Satcho couldn't be reduced to zero.

"Now, we would flee to ask for Aizu's protection."

...But there was a possibility that the killer was someone from Aizu as well, wasn't it?

Within her subconscious condition, Chizuru felt Kodo helping her to walk. Together, they went to the corner of the room, to a hidden door which led to a dark underground tunnel, which seemed that had been prepared by Kodo just for today's runaway.

"Your recovery might take time, but I'm sure Aizu could provide us with a safe place."

Half walking, half swaying. Chizuru was not able to hear Kodo's each word clearly any longer. Before she knew it, they had reached the end of tunnel and the abrupt midnight's freezing air bit her soft flesh mercilessly from inside out.

"Can you walk?"

A weak nod was given as an answer. Still, Chizuru demanded more explanation after this. One step at a time, Chizuru and Kodo walked silently, leaving the Satcho Headquarters. Between blurry images, Chizuru couldn't help but think that maybe this 'Kazama' had come back and was furious due to his bride's disappearance.

But like hell she was bothering about it. She just needed some good rest. After that, she would find the bastard who killed her parents. Chizuru was not the girl who usually held a grudge, but such horrible thing...she could never forgive the culprit.

Too many bad things happened in just one night. Chizuru was about to collapse and lose consciousness as she heard Kodo's voice between the harsh wind.

"After you fully recover already, I'm taking you to Shinsengumi. They would protect you for sure."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Phew...\*tired after writing such dark chapter  
D8\*<strong>

\*\*Anyway, I hope you liked and enjoyed this prologue ^\_^ Please leave a REVIEW! It means a lot for me! XD\*\*

## 2. Meeting

\*\*Hiya! I'm bringing you a new chapter! \*\*

\*\*Huff I miss the times where I could update so quickly T\_T My job almost kills me, and starting next week I'm gonna back to college for my next degree. Arrrrghhh~~~ Wish me luck!\*\*

\*\*Anyway, thank you for all the reviews! Kyaaa I'm soo happy that many of you who have read my other stories read this one as well! ^\_^  
\*\*

\*\*kenshin8923, thanks for being the first reviewer! ^\_^ Btw instead of Amagiri, I feel bad for Kodo...O\_O\*\*

\*\*mtnikolle, so happy you like the start! And also thank you for reviewing my other stories! \*\*

\*\*Marialena, haha actually I forgot about Kaoru's existence XD Should I feature him in later chapters? :P\*\*

\*\*Kit2000, keep following this story and you'll know who the murderer is! ;D \*feels like detective\*\*\*

\*\*AnonymousGuest, your wish has been fulfilled! XD \*\*

\*\*Akaki, welcome back! Yeah in the west, especially Hakuouki fanfictions, Saito x Chizuru doesn't develop well T\_T Kyaa but I also knew the fact that Saito is the most popular guy of otome games! It makes me soo happy XD\*\*

\*\*Reborn Angel From the Past, so many questions! I can't answer all of them lol~ but they will be answered one by one in this story XD And thanks for saying that I've improved! I can't judge myself so I need readers to tell me that XD The only improvement I've realized, hmm...maybe my English? O\_O\*\*

\*\*Let's start reading, everybody! Enjoy and tell me your impressions, ne? \*\_\*\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>BLURRED KALEIDOSCOPE<strong>

CHAPTER 2: MEETING

\* \* \*

><p>The layers of snow had just melted, revealing the shy buds beneath the white blanket which were ready to grow their beautiful flowers and refreshing green grass. It was the beginning of spring already, yet the air was still as freezing as ever.<p>

Inside her room—the place where she had spent her lonely life for the last six months, Chizuru fixed her pink kimono and white hakama pants. Then she strapped her family's kodachi—a short sword, on her waist. After making sure that everything was alright, she tied up her long chestnut locks into a ponytail.

Taking a small mirror from the nearest table, Chizuru was wondering whether her new appearance had resembled a boy or not. Well, she had her own reason for dressing like a boy. After all, she would live together with a group of men from this day onwards...

...At least, that was what Kodo suggested her to—even though Chizuru refused such crazy idea at first. As if losing both her parents at once was not enough, now her 'new father' wanted her to stay under the same roof with a bunch of male strangers? Heck, it was not easy to move on from great sorrow even after half a year. And now a new problem started to show itself.

However, Chizuru knew that she had no other choice. Kodo had told her everything, about her existence as a rare—or even the last pureblood female oni was not a mere casual thing. Although Chizuru didn't fully understand, she knew that the demon leader named Kazama

Chikage was longing to make her as his bride. All for the sake of oni clan's future, to get a new stronger heir.

The girl herself had never met this Kazama guy before. But judging by Kodo's story, he was definitely not a good man. And the doctor didn't want Chizuru to fall to Kazama's hands...Oh well, but now Chizuru was confused as she wasn't sure of what to believe. In the middle of a war, each side would think that the opposite one was a villain. There was no really difference between right and wrong.

Truth to be told, Kodo himself didn't look like a very good person. He was a traitor after all. But Chizuru understood she had to choose between Satcho or Aizu. Being neutral was already out of questions, now she knew that she was not an ordinary girlâ€”if not the 'chosen one.'

Trying to stay positive, Chizuru followed her late parents' wish to not join the Satcho. The family had never discussed such serious matter as they wanted to keep Chizuru away from the 'war' thing as far as possible. Yet if her parents had refused Satcho's invitations so many times, there must be a good reason behind it...Or was it just because Aizu never did the same, so Chizuru barely knew about the other clan's reputation?

Chizuru sighed heavily while sliding the door open. She couldn't stay forever in this confusing maze. For the past months, Kodo had taken care of her, and Aizu had given a protection to keep her safe. Her existence was a secret, and it was easier for Aizu to kill her directly if they didn't want Kazama to marry her and strengthen Satcho with the new demon ruler. However, Aizu didn't do that and protected her instead. That way, Chizuru felt that she had to be grateful and get rid of the possibility that someone from Aizu was her family's murderer.

Speaking of which, it looked like Aizu had investigated the caseâ€”or so Kodo told her, but they didn't find any clue about the culprit and the mysterious reason behind the assassination. Well, of course they wouldn't if the killer was really someone from Aiâ€”Alright, no more negative thoughts about Aizu Clan. Maybe her father and mother were really killed by just a group of thieves?

Chizuru was not raised as a girl who always placed suspicion on others, and she didn't want to grow up as one. As her steps took her outside the house, she sent a smile to Kodo, who had been waiting for her.

Both of them were fugitives. Satcho wanted their lives. Obviously they were willing to take Chizuru alive, but for Kodo...Chizuru thought that maybe Satcho Clan would pierce him into pieces upon finding the traitor. And the girl...just didn't wish her 'father', who had taken care of her wounded-self and become the only person she could talk to, being assassinated so mercilessly.

Thanks to Aizu soldiers. As the father-daughter walked together outside their residence's gate, Chizuru bowed deeply to them, thanking the brave warriors for protecting her life. She understood that herself and Kodo were guarded all day and night to guarantee that Satcho couldn't even touch the tip of their hair.

"Chizuru."

Chizuru was snapped back from her trance. She tilted her head to the side where Kodo was smiling at her. Some moments later, they had arrived at Kyoto's main street. Somehow, Chizuru missed the social life after being isolated for so long. Although she lived in a lonely place as well with her family, the young maiden always enjoyed her trip to the town where she could feel a lively atmosphere, see lots of laughing kids, chattering young women, and so on.

"I'm sorry for dragging you into this matter..." Kodo looked at her with guilty expression on his face, "Since the Lord of Aizu himself was the one who suggested it, I couldn't bring myself to object...But to be honest, I myself think that this decision is the best and only method for protecting your life."

"You don't need to apologize, Father." The young girl gave Kodo a calm and gentle smile, telling him that everything was going to be alright. "It was hard to accept at first, but now I know that my life is not only mine anymore...I must learn to accept the reality."

Somewhere in her deepest heart, Chizuru wished to become a normal girl, who lived with her family and didn't have to take a part in the war. Still, those things seemed impossible and so far away to reach upon recognizing her condition now. But she understood that her parents wouldn't be happy if she was just regretting her pitiful destiny over and over again. Moving on was the only thing she could do, though there was still a big scar on her heart.

"Don't worry. Saito is a good and responsible man. I'm sure he could bring you happiness." Kodo glanced at the light blue sky, not noticing his daughter's nervous reaction upon hearing his sudden statement.

Here it was...the actual reason of their journey today. Chizuru was going to leave their residence and move to a new place. The only same thing was, she would still be under Aizu's protection—maybe pretty different, because this time, the one who would protect her was Aizu's elite force. Shinsengumi was not just a bunch of ordinary warriors.

This fact somehow burdened the young girl. Was her existence so dangerous that Aizu needed to use their best soldiers? Yet she attempted to accept all of these wholeheartedly. She didn't want to bother people again. All that she could do was being a good wife for one of the Shinsengumi captains.

If she remembered it correctly...his name was Saito Hajime?

Yes, it was the crazy idea Lord of Aizu, Matsudaira Katamori suggested. Fortunately—or unfortunately, Kodo and the Commander of Shinsengumi himself agreed almost immediately when receiving that command. In order to prevent the birth of new strong oni, all they could think of was to get an arranged marriage for the Yukimura heiress and one of their high-ranking samurai.

Their marriage wouldn't produce a great heir or anything indeed. Still, it was enough to make the demon lord lose interest to Chizuru. At least, he was not going to force her to be his bride again.

Chizuru understood if this thing was like hitting a bird with two stones, where she didn't have to give more power to Satcho—the clan her parents didn't like, and also a great advantage to Aizu itself.

A sigh escaped her throat as she saw a huge manor from a far, with some people in light-blue haori walking in front of it...Well, arranged marriage was not a new or weird thing in this era. In reality, many of the marriages had happened due to agreement from both family sides with so many kind of purposes. Yet it was too sudden for Chizuru. In addition, she had not fully moved on from her sadness.

Lost in thoughts, the anxious maiden was trying to chase any negative thoughts away. She was going to live here after all, and Shinsengumi's protection was necessary...Oh no, but her steps became heavier as she entered the mansion and felt the gate guardians glaring at her.

\* \* \*

><p><em>I wonder how the captains would look like...As elite warriors, they must have grumpy faces, scary behavior, wounded bodies and such. I hope everything will be alright...<em>

\* \* \*

><p>"Wow! So you're Chizuru-chan!"<p>

"You're a pureblood oni?! It's hard to believe! You look like a cute normal girl for me!"

"It seems we're about the same age! Call me Heisuke, okay?"

"Nice to meet you, Chizuru-chan!"

Chizuru's brown eyes blinked rapidly, couldn't believe what her eyes saw and her ears heard. They were all the captains of Shinsengumi? So unbelievable and way too different from her imagination. Even their subordinates who escorted her to this room were much scarier.

"Hey, you guys made her feel uneasy. Stop acting way too friendly, introduce yourself properly first." A man in black haori gave the rest of men a scowl. He seemed like the leader among them.

In no time, the captains had introduced themselves to Chizuru. Their easy-going attitude slowly made Chizuru feel a bit comfortable. At least, all of these things weren't as bad as she thought before. One by one, she tried to remember all of her new friends' name: Okita Souji, Nagakura Shinpachi, Harada Sanosuke, Toudou Heisuke, and then the Vice-Commander, Hijikata Toshizo, and also the Commander, Kondou Isami...She barely noticed the glommy man with glasses in the corner of the room just if Heisuke didn't call him to greet her. But it looked like the man named Sannan Keisuke was not really interested with her...or was it just his personality? He seemed unhappy, and Chizuru could just gulp when she realized that Sannan's right hand was wrapped in bandage. He was clearly injured and it was the source of his bad mood. Chizuru knew how precious a hand was for the samurai.

After that, an old kind man came in. It was revealed that he was also one of the captains named Inoue Genzaburo. With a fatherlike-smile, he prepared teas for the guests and the other captains. Chizuru couldn't help but choose to give a hand for this too-humble Shinsengumi official.

Seemed like all the captains had gathered...the only ones who knew she was actually an oni. Aside from them, just the investigators of Shinsengumi—who were still on mission, called Yamazaki and Shimada who knew the truth as well. The lower soldiers didn't need to know about that...It was the same with their innocence about the secret project of Aizu called 'Ochimizu.'

Speaking of the Ochimizu thing, Chizuru had known about this shocking truth. And she also knew that Kodo would also bring up this topic today with the Shinsengumi executives...Yet before the people jumped into this matter, was it true that all captains had gathered in this meeting room?

"Where is Saito?"

Shinpachi yawned and leaned against the wall. He murmured something like \_'Saito made a perfect decision. Just if I knew that Chizuru-chan was this cute, I would have offered myself to be her husband,'\_ and received a death glare from Hijikata afterwards.

Chizuru let out a quiet giggle. Perhaps the captain was the same like her, thinking the fact that she was a pureblood oni was a scary one. Maybe they imagined her as an ugly witch and such...

...But wait, judging by Shinpachi's words. It seemed that this Saito guy offered himself by his own will to be her husband, while she had always thought that Lord Katamori had pointed a random warrior to marry her. Chizuru couldn't help but think that Saito Hajime was a brave man, taking a risk to marry a demon without even knowing about her personality and appearance first.

\* \* \*

><p><em>Probably Saito-san is the kind of guy who always put a mission first? A loyal and dedicated warrior...<em>

\* \* \*

><p>As though her silent question was answered, Okita spoke lazily, "Hajime-kun is as cold as ever. I bet that he forgot about today's meeting and went to patrol like always."<p>

\* \* \*

><p><em>...Is that so?<em>

\* \* \*

><p>Attempting to discard her disappointment, Chizuru managed to settle a bitter smile. She understood that it was only an arranged marriage, where Saito probably felt forced and burdened to marry her, although it was the same with her...But hey, what kind of a husband-wannabe who didn't care about the formal meeting with a woman

he was going to marry tomorrow?<p>

Oh yes. By the way, \_tomorrow\_ will be her wedding day. And now, she started to doubt Saito's seriousness. Because Okita said such statement as if it was not a new thing for Saito to ignore other problems when his missions had not been fulfilled yet.

A cough from Hijikata brought Chizuru back to the earth. It was obvious he was trying to get rid of the awkward silence that followed afterwards.

The Vice Commander turned his eyes to Kodo, "Yukimura-dono, do you bring it?"

Chizuru gulped as she saw Kodo bringing out a vial bottle from his pocket. The red-blood liquid inside the glass immediately turned the once fun atmosphere into a serious one. Chizuru knew what it was; Ochimizu, the secret potion ordered by the Shogun himself to create, in order to form a more powerful force.

However, Chizuru realized that the potion was not fully completed yet. It turned people into bloodthirsty creatures, though their power would be multiplied by ten or so she heard. In other words, it created fake demons or rasetzu.

To be honest, Chizuru didn't like this idea. She knew that Shinsengumi was burdened with a task to hold this project, while Kodo was the creator of Ochimizu. She also heard that Shinsengumi Headquarters—the place where she would live from now on, had a special room where they used living people as guinea pigs. Usually, they were traitors or rogue samurai...But still, they were humans, right?

"I've added some new substance, so I think the possibility that rasetzu will lose their mind after taking Ochimizu could be reduced," said Kodo quietly as he stared at the transparent glass bottle on the floor.

For a second, Chizuru swore she saw a glint of enthusiasm in Sannan's eyes. The injured man got up and walked closer to take the Ochimizu, "Is that true, Yukimura-dono? If so, then it would be great to have stronger warriors who don't lose their sanity after drinking this..."

Chizuru's body shivered upon hearing Sannan's excited tone. Was he really excited or was it just Chizuru's feeling? Quietly, Sannan stepped out of the room as a grin graced his features. Even Chizuru could guess that he was the one in charge of Ochimizu experiment in this manor.

"Sannan-san." Suddenly, Hijikata let out a voice and it made Sannan stop. Looking at Sannan's back seriously, Hijikata continued his words, "You don't plan to take the potion by yourself, do you?"

Sannan chuckled lightly and turned his eyes a bit to Hijikata, "...What are you saying? I'm not that stupid." But then he looked down at his limp arm, "Still...if that's true that the medicine has been improved, then..."



Without any other words, Sannan exited the room and slid the door shut, leaving the stern atmosphere become even more tormenting. After some seconds, Inoue made an attempt to calm the confused and scared girl down.

The old man smiled at Chizuru, "Don't worry. He was originally a good guy...It's just..."

"...he became crazy after his right arm was wounded and couldn't be used anymore." Shinpachi continued Inoue's speech, in his ownâ€"or all people's opinion, since they seemed agreed with Shinpachi.

"Well, Chizuru-chan," Okita smirked teasingly as he slid closer to the young girl, "Just don't follow him to the warehouse in the back, okay? It's not a good place for a woman."

A weary nod was given as a retort. Okita didn't need to tell her that. Chizuru had never planned to see the place where living people were treated like experimental animals. She felt the urge to throw up upon imagining what it would look like.

"Um, well..." Harada spoke quietly as he noticed Chizuru's uneasy expression. "Let's wait for Saito, okay?"

That was right. Back to topic, Chizuru told herself. How about forgetting about all the weird things happened? Tomorrow was her wedding day, after all...

"Commander! Vice-Commander!"

As soon as it appeared, the owner of that sudden voice slid the door open in haste. He gave a deep polite bow to Kondo and Hijikata from the doorway, didn't even care about the other captains' or Chizuru's and her father's existence.

Hijikata narrowed his amethyst eyes, "What is it, Saito? You seem to be in a rush."

"Hajime-kun! We've been waiting for you!" Heisuke exclaimed happily, and quickly Chizuru realized that he was the Saito guy she was going to marry tomorrow. Thank goodness that he finally came. Maybe he just noticed the time and felt guilty andâ€"

"We've captured several men from Satcho. It seems they are pretty important persons in the clan. I believe they hold some secret information, and of course my division would do our best to force them to speak."

Trembling, Chizuru couldn't say nor think of anything. Her thoughts before were fading away. Not only the purple-haired young male didn't give a crap about her presence, but also he wanted to do another thing while he should have greeted his bride-wannabe.

Well, it was his job as one of Shinsengumi officials. But, still...

Settling a weak smile, Chizuru bowed to Saito, who finally noticed her. Right, he would be the man of her life, her protector, and it was just normal for her to introduce herself first.

"Nice to meet you, Saito-san...My name is Yukimura Chizuru, please be good to me for life!"

"Captain Saito! One of the prisoners ran away!"

Not even bothered to hear Chizuru's self-introduction, Saito quickly unsheathed his katana and rushed towards his subordinate's voice, leaving the maiden to freeze in place...

...Yet the fact that Saito was a cold man was not the only one that made her rooted onto the floor. She saw it, the unique characteristic when Saito took out his sword. The unforgettable trait she never told anyone, including Kodo.

Cold sweat drenched her clothes as she remembered the shadow figure she saw on the night her parents were slaughtered. Barely listened to Kondou's \_'Sorry for his behavior'\_ or Heisuke's \_'Don't worry! Hajime-kun is just too busy at the moment!\_', Chizuru heard her own voice, in the form of shaking whisper.

"...Is Saito-san...always fighting with his left hand?"

Nothingness prevailed, then Hijikata answered, "Yes. He's a very skilled left-handed warrior...As you know, people discriminate left-handed samurai. Maybe that's the reason of his earlier behavior. He's very loyal to us because Shinsengumi is the only place where he could find his real self, where nobody laughs at him for fighting with his left hand. Also"Chizuru?"

Abruptly, her body became limp and refused to move. As the traumatic event kept on replaying in her brain, Chizuru felt Kodo catch her weak body. No, such a bad coincidence wouldn't happen...

"Chizuru-chan?! What happened?" The rest looked at her with concern. Probably they thought Saito had hurt her feelings so much that she almost collapsed. What a silly deduction...It was far more serious than that.

Left-handed samurai was rare, or even didn't exist at all. Hence upon finding one, plus the fact that he was gonna be her husband, Chizuru felt her head spinning and torturing her...Speaking of torture...Was that insensitive guy torturing the prisoners to get the information right now? On the \_very\_ day before his marriage?

\* \* \*

><p>Finally, Chizuru managed to calm down and tell the men that she was just exhausted. Excusing herself, Kodo and some captains escorted her to the guest room. On her way, Chizuru took a glimpse at the back of mansion. Although she couldn't see the warehouse from her current location, she was sure that Saito was there, forcing the prisoners to speak before the mad Sannan turned them into rasetzu.<p>

Things couldn't get worse, right? As she entered the room to get a good rest, she kept on telling herself that it was just a coincidence...Saito was not her parents' murderer. But her other self \_did\_ place a suspicion on him...She didn't know what to trust, and prefer to cry in silence before falling asleep.

When finally she got better and went to have dinner together, Saito was still not there. Although the captains attempted to make a fun conversation during the meal, it couldn't erase great sorrow, confusion, worry, and many unexplained feelings in her heart.

Walking back to her room, Chizuru stared at the white wedding kimono Kodo had prepared for her. Yes, tomorrow she was going to wear that and give herself to a somewhat-heartless man named Saito Hajime...

...Was it really a perfect choice? She didn't know which one was better between marrying Saito and Kazama.

A lot of questions were dancing in her head, as if they wanted to make her lose her mind. Could she really trust the Shinsengumi? Or especially, the left-handed captain of third division?

Whatever. She was already here and didn't have choice of turning back. What she didn't expect was, the fact that Saito was left-handed and he was the only Shinsengumi captain who didn't greet her properlyâ€”beside Sannan, perhaps.

As Chizuru laid her tired body down to sleep, she kept praying that Saito wasn't really the culprit. She couldn't ignore Aizu after all the good things and protection they provided her. The girl also wished that at least, Saito could be a good husband, because divorce was already out of questions. It was really a disgrace and she didn't need an additional bad luck in her life...

...Wait, why the hell she was already thinking of divorce when the marriage itself had not started yet? Trying to keep calm, Chizuru could just hope the best for tomorrow.

Sleeping soundly and hopefully, she didn't realize that there was a figure passing by her room, illuminated by the moonlight. Signs of exhaustion were clearly seen on his blood-stained face after overworking all day.

Saito halted right away upon realizing that the Satcho men's blood was dripping on his way. Sighing, he took off his bloody haori and cleaned the crimson liquid from the wooden floor in front of Chizuru's room. That innocent-looking girl didn't need to see this.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>...Why do I feel that this story is gonna be darker than my previous one, the modern-fairytale one (or so it seems)?  
D8<strong>

\*\*Kyaaa anyway, I love all my stories \*narcissistic mode:on\* , so I hope you like it as much as I do ^\_^ Your REVIEW will keep me going and make my day! \*\*

\*\*Thanks for reading!\*\*

### 3. Marriage

**\*\*I almost die from exhaustion D8 Dang my classes will start tomorrow, and with the pile of works waiting arrrghh ~\*claws the wall\*\*\***

**\*\*Ahem, but I'm not going to complain about my busy life here ~.~ Ugh wish I were Chizuru, I would gladly take Saito as my husband! Ah anyway, thank you for all your nice reviews! They always make me smile and I often read them over and over again when I'm stressed out XD\*\***

**\*\*Marialena, ugh yeah that's the way Saito is, sometimes I wish him to be a little warmer.\*\***

**\*\*Lily, this chapter is for ya! ;D\*\***

**\*\*Akaki, lol wish Chizuru kick some sense into Saito's head and make him fall in love with her! XD\*\***

**\*\*mtnikolle, there's still a long way to go before that mystery is unveiled :P it's a detective story after all!...Err did I just say 'detective'? O\_O \*so off topic\*\*\***

**\*\*Kit2000, lalala I know you love weddings! So this is the wedding chapter! Although it's not a very beautiful one XD \*read: angsty\*\*\***

**\*\*AnonymousGuest, hope you like this new chapter! XD\*\***

**\*\*Akiko88, hello again! The things will develop one step at a time ;D\*\***

**\*\*Okayyy~ please enjoy this update! Honestly I wrote this in hurry...so forgive me if it's a little bit boring ~.~\*\***

**\* \* \***

**><p><strong>BLURRED KALEIDOSCOPE<strong>**

**CHAPTER 3: MARRIAGE**

**\* \* \***

**><p>Her eyes had betrayed her when they opened up against their owner's will.<p>**

**Why did she have to wake up? Even though she tried to accept her sorrowful destiny wholeheartedly, she had silently wished for this day to never come.**

**Leaving the warmth and comfort the thick blanket offered, Chizuru got up from the futon and needed several minutes to finally reach out a hand and take the elaborate pure-white kimono, also some hair accessories from the cabinet.**

**A wedding day was every girl's wish, and now one dream had come true. Some were lucky enough to marry the men they really chose and loved. On the other hand, lots of young women in samurai era didn't have opportunity to do such thing...Hence they were trapped in arranged marriages, like Chizuru's condition now.**

Still, it was actually not that bad. Arranged marriages were common, and usually the love would bloom by itself since you would see the same husband everyday, prepare meals for him, wait for him every night after an exhausting working day, and have some adorable children who would complete your happiness as a woman.

Had you ever felt that way? Like, the first time you sat by your husband's side on the wedding day, thinking like 'I barely knew him a few days ago! It's gonna be hell!' Yet little by little, slowly but sure, he started to show some affection, and you felt the same...Didn't you think it was amazing? Please don't think of an arranged marriage as a careless occasion. As its name stated, it was arranged very thoughtfully and only held by honored family, to bring advantages for both sides...maybe the reason was pretty different in Chizuru's case. But nevertheless, her wedding was planned by Lord Katamori himself, a man who held the highest position in the entire Aizu Clan. Not to mention, her husband was Saito Hajime, a well-known captain of the elite force, Shinsengumi.

And since an arranged marriage was supposed to bring good purpose, you would never—or rarely find a husband who was going to do some violence at home. No, this kind of bond was different from a forceful rape. It was a regarded thing planned by the entire family, and your husband didn't want to ruin his own parents—or lord's reputation, did he?

A ghost of smile lined Chizuru's lips as she was lost in these thoughts. She understood that she was just trying to soothe her broken-self. But in the deepest heart, she really hoped that all the pleasant things of an arranged marriage she often heard would happen in her life as well...

...Although the first impression of her husband was the worst she could ever imagine.

Looking around at her surroundings, Chizuru exhaled heavily. Tonight she was going to leave this guest room and move to that emotionless you-know-who's bedroom...then present herself to him.

However, as if her already pitiful fate was mocking her, suddenly Kodo called her from outside. When Chizuru stepped out of her room, Kodo told her to pack up her stuff quickly and move to Saito's room right away, because they couldn't afford Chizuru to be alone while the others were preparing the wedding. Even though Shinsengumi Headquarters was the safest place they could ever think of, they couldn't risk even a tiniest chance to lose the last pureblood female on—the fact that made Chizuru often feel stressed out.

"But, Father..." Chizuru walked hesitantly besides Kodo as they went closer to that certain room, "Isn't Saito-san in his room? As far as I'm concerned, the tradition doesn't let the groom to see me before I reach the main hall."

Kodo tilted his head to the side and smiled upon seeing his daughter's uneasy expression, "Don't worry, Saito is in another room right now. The others helped him to dress up at the moment."

Chizuru only nodded in relief, not realizing that there was no difference between staying in the guest room or Saito's this morning.

There was no other person who would watch over her, after all.

\* \* \*

><p>But when she entered Saito's neat roomâ€"and somehow felt Kodo smirking in sly manner when he left, Chizuru just realized the truth in her father's other statement. That was right, wedding kimonos were a pain. Even the male one needed several people to help the groom dressing up...And now, she was all alone, with an elaborate and obviously more difficult-to-wear kimono.<p>

Chizuru started to panic, but she managed to calm herself down several minutes later. She knew that Aizu Clan had sponsored this wedding occasion, because they wanted Chizuru to have at least a memorable wedding day, instead of forcing her to give herself to Saito without any proper ritualâ€"which was actually easier for them.

That was why she tried to be grateful...But since it was a secret marriage, she knew that Aizu Clan couldn't afford outsiders to know about it at all...which meant there was no any other women who could help her to wear that pain-in-the-ass kimono. If they made too many ruckus about this wedding, Satcho Clan's spies would surely know and kidnap her, then force her to marry Kazama instead.

Oh well, marriage, marriage, what else? Suddenly she felt like being in the confusing maze where two biggest clans wanted to unite her with one of their men. Was she really that popular or what?

Whatever. Slowly, she slid the door open and wish Kodo was still there to help her. But what welcomed her was only an awkward silence within the empty hallway, so she closed it again and started to undress herself, praying that everything would end up well.

Facing the beautiful silky kimono she was going to wear, Chizuru's fingertips felt the luxurious softness on it...and the girl was wondering of how expensive it was. Lord of Aizu was truly something.

Not willing to tear the silky fabric off, Chizuru lifted it up very carefully and began to wrap her petite figure. It was the first time she wore such soft and velvety clothes and felt like being a true woman. Maybe this wedding was not really that bad...perhaps she was just thinking too much...

As the young maiden smiled to herself while trying to stay positive, somehow there was a gust of chilly wind touched her back. But she didn't care about that, it was the beginning of the spring and the cold weather was just normal...

...Wait, how could there was an abrupt wind when she had surely closed the door without leaving even a small gap?

"What are you doing here?"

Like she was choked by her own spit, a great surprise struck the bride of the day like a merciless lightning. She turned her body around immediately just to see a young man, dressed in black wedding kimono and dark-grey hakama pants. His long purple bangs covered a

half of that cold and expressionless face, and was loosened down into a low ponytail that draped over his right shoulder.

As Saito slid the door shut and went even closer to her, Chizuru didn't dare to look at that pair of deep-ocean eyes which seemed could absorb one's soul. Several seconds later, Chizuru just realized that she was only half-dressed. Thank goodness she had covered her body with the kimono even though the obi was still lying and forgotten on the floor. Cursing under her breath, the girl regretted her stupidity to admire that expensive fabric for too long.

"I asked you." Saito stated coldly. There was no slight satisfaction on his face upon finding a helpless maiden—"without a belt on her kimono. "What are you doing here?"

Gripping her clothes even tighter, Chizuru gulped. Beads of sweat began to form on her forehead as she stuttered and tried to explain her reason...which was clearly unnecessary because she was going to sleep here starting today. However, Saito acted like she was a sort of thief, so Chizuru had no any other choice but to make a good explanation.

For a second, Saito seemed confused while asking, "Yukimura-dono asked you to be here so you could be safer? It doesn't make any difference because everybody is busy right now..."

He was right. Now Chizuru just recognized it. She didn't want to think that old man had made a stupid prank with her on this wedding day. Yet Saito's next words had made her want to send Kodo flying high to the outer space.

"Strange, Yukimura-dono didn't mention anything about you being in my room when he asked me to go back and wait here until the ceremony begins...I thought it was the custom, but..."

Chizuru swore to kick that mad doctor's bald head after this. In one way and another, Chizuru understood that Kodo just wanted her and the groom to know each other deeper, but this kind of joke was not funny at all. More importantly, Saito was still not interested with her presence as the samurai turned his back to her and walked towards the door without saying anything.

Yet he stopped right away before opening the door. Tardily, he turned back and glanced at Chizuru's clothes. The maiden felt even more anxious now Saito had known about her kimono-problem, and the annoying pink blush found its way to her cheeks while her groom taking the obi from the floor.

"Saito-san, what are you—"?! Chizuru gasped as the man took a position behind her back and circled the obi on her slim waist.

When Saito started to answer, Chizuru could hear his deep voice clearly on her earlobe, and his warm breath on the soft flesh of her neck made the young woman wondering, was it the feeling of having a handsome—the trait she didn't even notice the day before—"man right beside you? Well, it was not her fault to live far away from humanity and never experience such thing. Still, it was not love...just a childish nervousness.

"Forgive us for couldn't provide you with any bridesmaid." Saito

whispered, sending shivers down to Chizuru's spine as he fixed the obi's position on his bride's hip. "But you must understand, we haveâ€œ"

"I know." Chizuru cut Saito's speech, feeling the warmth from his broad chest that leaned against her back. "I know it very well. My life is not only mine...It's my fate and I have to accept it instead of cursing it over and over again."

Silence descended upon them, before finally Saito retorted, "And...I expect you've understood as well that there's no turning back after this?"

Not a typical conversation between the couple who would be one soul and body within the few hours. Yet Chizuru didn't want to worsen the problem and just nodded wearily.

Minutes passed, Chizuru had gotten used to Saito's hands which were helping her to dress up. However, she felt a nightmare was replayed again in her mind everytime Saito's left hand touched her body, and it happened a lot because it was truly his dominant hand.

Judging by Hijikata's words yesterday, it was a sensitive thing for Saito. But...

"Um...Saito-san?" Chizuru turned her eyes slightly over her shoulder.

"Drop the formality."

That cold voice was totally devoid of emotions, but it was enough to make Chizuru felt more anxious. He was right, she was going to use 'Saito' as her surname as well. And the proper manner to call her husband was...

"...Hajime-san."

"What is it?"

Completely the opposite to Chizuru's nervous gesture, Saito still didn't wear any expression at all. Before Chizuru knew it, Saito had finished dressing her up and the bride could tell that Saito did it neatly and beautifully. As they were facing each other again, Chizuru took a deep breath before asking bravely.

"I heard you're a very skilled left-handed samurai..." Yet she became silent directly when Saito's eyes narrowed upon hearing her 'left-handed' statement.

"Any problem with that?"

"...No...not at all." Chizuru's courage before was fading away. Now she kept on telling herself that she didn't want to make the situation become even worse...because he was her husband, wasn't he?

Saito walked away from her and slid the door open. Before he completely disappeared from her sight, the young male placed his beautiful cerulean orbs on his bride in somewhat graceful manner.



"I'm waiting for you in the main hall. Just turn left from this room after you finish the preparation and you'll get there."

\* \* \*

><p>If you were a girl who never wore make-up, then suddenly being asked to put your make-up on by yourself on your wedding day, what was your reaction? Probably your husband could give you a hand in wearing a complex kimono, but you couldn't expect him to do the same in cosmetic thing.<p>

Praying that her make-up didn't make her face look like a kabuki performer, Chizuru inhaled and entered the main hall...just to find out that it was truly a secret wedding. The only 'guests' were the Shinsengumi soldiers themselves, with the executives and Kodo in the front row...And the groom himself, sitting with his eyes closed in the main stage.

"Captain Saito! Your bride has come!"

"Wow, what a beautiful babe!"

"Sshhh...you're acting impolite. She's Captain Saito's wife, you know."

Pressing her lips into a sour smile, Chizuru tried not to stumble down while passing crowds of annoying warriors who were looking at her in admiration. She couldn't blame them, though. But it was kinda frustrating to know that she was the only woman here, and to make it worse, she was the star of the day.

All by herself, without any bridesmaid who could help her walk, at last Chizuru reached the main stage and shyly took position besides Saito. She felt all the eyes in the hall staring at her, as if seeing a creature called 'woman' was a rare stuff. Many of them were chattering, laughing, and such...while the wedding ceremony was supposed to be quiet in solemnity.

After some moments, when Kondou and Hijikata gave the ceremonial sake for them to drink, Chizuru realized that there was no priest who would bless their sacred bond. Even though Aizu didn't want an outsider to come, but how could this thing be called a marriage?

"Don't space out." Chizuru was snapped back to reality upon listening to that deep cold voice. She tilted her head and saw Saito drinking the sake calmly. Biting her lips, Chizuru was hesitated before sipping her own sake, marking that they were officially husband and wife.

By drinking the ceremonial sake, they were supposed to say the wedding vow in hearts. But Chizuru didn't do that, how could she do such sacred ritual when the main hall was filled with a bunch of noisy soldiers? And she was sure Saito didn't even know what a wedding vow was. That expressionless guy...

\* \* \*

><p>"Saito! You've become a true man!"<p>

"Good luck for tonight, Hajime-kun! Don't hurt Chizuru, do 'it' gently!"

"Chizuru-chan, if Saito does something harsh, you may call me to switch him as your husband!"

Only in Shinsengumi Headquarters where people could find the traditional wedding party with the guests walking freely here and there in the main stage with reeks of sake from their mouths.

For Chizuru, the party was way better than the ceremony. Perhaps the samurai's noisy nature had made the party become more livelyâ€"which they shouldn't have done at the ceremony. One step at a time, she began to enjoy this wedding party...But what bothered her was, her now official husband just kept silent without saying even a word. Maybe he was just a quiet type, yet it was already exaggerating.

Attempting to get rid of the awkward atmosphere between them, Chizuru sent a smile to Saito, "Hajime-san...how is the food?"

"Oh, 'Hajime-san'!" The drunk Shinpachi laughed and grabbed Saito's shoulder by force, making the younger man obviously feel irritated. "Tell me, when did you two get closer?"

The heat was rising on Chizuru's cheeks. She couldn't tell that Saito had accidentally helped her before...and she was sure that Saito didn't want anyone else to know about that.

The party lasted until night. And one by one, the drunk warriors were going back to their rooms, which were on the back of the main mansion. Well, they didn't know that the pretty bride was an oni, after all.

When the only people left were Kodo and Shinsengumi officialsâ€"except Sannan who didn't seem to enjoy the party and went away earlier, Chizuru used this opportunity to know them better. Now she had introduced herself to the investigators, Yamazaki and Shimada as well.

The captains were all nice, and most of them were cheerful-types, besides the strict Hijikata and well...her husband.

"Chizuru..." After some fun conversation, Kodo placed his hand on Chizuru's shoulder, "Get back to your room, okay? Just prepare everything before Saito comes."

Chizuru nodded and bowed to all the captains before stepping out of the hall. Trying not to take a revenge on Kodo's prank, she soundlessly closed the door from outside.

As her footsteps faded away, Kondou's once happy expression turned into more serious one. The Commander of Shinsengumi turned his eyes to Saito, the most loyal captain he could have asked for, "Saito, now you have to protect her with all your life. It's your own choice and you know what the responsibility of having Chizuru as your wife, don't you?"

Saito gave a deep bow, "I know, I will do my best...I won't

disappoint you, Kondou-san."

"But really, Hajime-kun..." Okita smirked mischievously, "We didn't think that you would offer yourself to marry Chizuru-chan when Yukimura-dono ran away from Satcho with the last pureblood female oni. Although it was Lord Katamori's idea...it was not exactly an order, just a crazy suggestion."

Heisuke widened his eyes in excitement, "Hey, Hajime-kun! Don't tell me that you already got a feeling that Chizuru is a cute girl! Ah, now I regret for not offering myself as her husband!"

Still, Saito didn't give any satisfying answer and decided to excuse himself before the other captains interrogated him more which would surely end up as irritating gossip. When he was about to go out of the hall, his pace stopped as Kodo murmured, "Hmm...now Saito has married Chizuru, I think we could feel relieved a bit. But I'm still curious about the culprit who killed her parents."

"Yeah, it's a mysterious case," said Harada quietly, "When you told us about their existence, I never expected that they would have gone just several days afterwards."

All of a sudden, Hijikata narrowed his eyes and somehow the captains could see slight suspicion in those purple orbs, "I don't want to say this, but it's impossible for ordinary criminals to find their residence and kill them...Judging by Yukimura-dono's explanation, Satcho desperately wanted Yukimura family to join their force, making them less likely to be the murderer...In other wordsâ€œ"

"Hey, Toshi!" Kondou scowled at Hijikata, "You suspect that someone from Aizu was the one who killed them?"

Sighing, Hijikata was silent for a moment before continuing his previous words, "That's why I said that I don't want to say this. Lord Katamori knew about their existence, but he never gave us an order to assassinate them. Well, he would never do it because Yukimura family was on neutral side..." Again, there was a fire in Hijikata's eyes as he stated, "The only ones in Aizu who know about Yukimura family are just Lord Katamori and us, the officials of Shinsengumi...Even in the worst case if Lord Katamori really wanted them to die, he would've given such a dangerous mission to us, Aizu's elite soldiers. However, we never received such order, hence if the murderer was someone from Aizu...that means..."

Looking at the eyes of his subordinates, Hijikata muttered in a stern tone, "...The culprit is among us, the Shinsengumi, someone who has neglected order and acted stupid by himself."

For a long moment, only the uncomfortable silent atmosphere filled the room, until Kondou laughed bitterly, "Hey, I think you're thinking too much, Toshi!"

"Haha, that's right!" Heisuke poured down the sake into Hijikata's cup, "You're just drunk! I remember when we went together to Shimabara, you said something weird to geisha there and they laughed at you! Couldn't believe that the famous Demon Vice-Commander of Shinsengumi could say something silly!"

"Hijikata-san is a loser when it comes to drinking!"

"Damn you all..."

Laughing until his jaw almost dropped literally, Shinpachi drank the last drop of sake left, "Hijikata-san, I was shocked that you said something serious on this happy day, but it was revealed that you're only drunk! Go ahead and apologize to Saito! You've ruined the mood of his wedding day! Right, Saito? Eh?"

There was no answer. The captain of Shinsengumi's third division had left the main hall, leaving the door wide open—"an unusual mistake for someone very careful like him to do.

\* \* \*

><p>Meanwhile in another room, the bride of the day was waiting for her husband. She had wiped off her make-up, but was still dressed in her white wedding attire. Just in a few minutes...Saito would come and take it all off.<p>

It was a lie if she said that she was ready for all that might happen tonight. Yet still, when the door was opened, she bowed deeply to the young male who just came in. A good wife would respect her husband, wouldn't she?

"Raise your head," Saito commanded reluctantly as he sat in front of Chizuru, looking straight at his wife.

Obedying the man who would protect her forever, Chizuru shifted her gaze onto him, and secretly admired his sharp but charming eyes. He had such handsome appearance...just if his attitude was the same.

Abruptly, Saito reached out a hand and placed it under Chizuru's chin. The girl squeezed her eyes shut due to reflexes. Here it was, the time when they would become one...the very time when the demon lord would lose interest to her, since her pure blood would be tainted by a human and it would cast away her ability for giving birth to a pureblood oni heir.

"Don't worry, I won't touch you."

Chizuru's eyes wide opened in surprise. Somewhat she felt relieved, yet she couldn't believe her ears. As Saito dropped his hand to the side, he spoke in a low and flat tone, "I can tell that you're scared. To be honest, I don't want to do it yet...Let me be frank, I'm not good at things like these. I decided to marry you because it's all for Aizu's sake, Shinsengumi's sake. Your existence is important and we can't let you fall into Satcho's hands."

This 'all for duty' stuff somehow had hurt Chizuru. She knew it was the reality, but she didn't think a husband should bring up that thing in their wedding night.

"But, Hajime-san..."

"You're afraid that Kazama Chikage would kidnap and force you to give him a heir? No need to worry, once he knows about our marriage, he won't care about your existence anymore...Nobody will know that you're still untainted pureblood oni."

Pressing her lips into thin line, mixture of emotions dominated Chizuru's heart. She was relieved that Saito didn't want to do it yet, but her heart was also hurt by his words that somehow rejected her. Just what was the point of marrying her then? This young captain intended to deceive Kazama? Well, normally people would think that a married couple would do 'it' right away on their first night. Probably Saito planned to pretend that he had stained her pure blood? As if there would be an impolite person who was going to ask whether they had done it or not...Stupid.

All of the dreamy things about arranged marriage had disappeared. This heartless husband didn't seem to try growing the love within their bond. Chizuru could barely hear Saito's next speech, talking about his mission, that she could count on him, that he would protect her because it was his lord's order, and anything else that a normal husband wouldn't say aloud in front of his wife.

Before Chizuru knew it, her eyes had been layered by thin coat of tears. She started to feel regret. Just why her husband was the coldest man ever? It was better if she married another captain. But such thought was useless, now she was trapped already.

Getting rid of another thought that Saito's help before was his attempt to show an affection—no way, someone like him would never think about that, Chizuru's tears fell down onto the floor. Upon realizing this, she quickly wiped her tears away with the long sleeve of her kimono, though Saito had seen it.

"I-I'm sorry, Hajime-san...I'm just..." Trying to make up a reason, Chizuru couldn't say anything as Saito placed his left hand, again, under her chin. But this time, his face went closer until their noses were almost touching. And those eyes...she couldn't turn her gaze away from his piercing irises.

"I know that you're already unhappy with me," Saito's whisper made Chizuru was even more hypnotized, as if someone had read her soul and forced her to speak only the truth...and her guess was right.

"I'm sure you have a lot of things in your mind right now..." He muttered quietly, "...Instead of crying, why don't you speak it aloud so your burden could be lifted a bit? Just be honest."

As a trail of tears kept rolling down her cheeks, Chizuru observed those forceful azure eyes for a little longer and unconsciously slapped Saito's left hand away from her face. Her husband didn't seem shocked and waited for the response patiently.

True, she had lots of things to say in her messed-up mind. After experiencing the worst wedding night a bride could ever imagine, with the worst husband who only had 'mission' in his head, the one that she wanted to voice out the most was...

"I don't love you."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Originally I planned to separate this chapter into two. But it would make the story's pace become slower and boring...hope you enjoyed it though!<strong>

**\*\*As for the next update \*plays sad music in the background\*, it's gonna be a bit late D: College and job almost kill me...and maybe you've noticed that usually I post an update on weekend, but unfortunately this weekend I have a family tradition to celebrate and I'll be busy with all the preparations D: \*\***

**\*\*Still, I hope to see a bunch of REVIEWS from you guys! XD Maybe they will do wonders to me? (they always do!) Aww please don't be silent because your impressions are necessary for me and this story's development.\*\***

**\*\*Thanks for reading!\*\***

**\* \* \***

**><p><strong>P.S.: Just a little bit of information: my other story called 'Petals of Time' (completed) has been translated to Spanish by Lovene Chan! Please check it out if you're interested! The title is 'P  talos de Tiempo'<strong>**

**\*\*P.S.: Les contar   algunas novedades: mi otra historia, llamada 'P  talos de Tiempo' (o 'Petals of Time'), que ya est   completa, est   siendo traducida al espa  ol por Lovene Chan! D  nle un vistazo si est  n interesados!\*\***

#### **4. Rasetsu**

**\*\*Hello guys, I'm backkkk~~ and HAPPY late VALENTINE'S DAY! \*throws sparkling heart-shaped confetti everywhere\*\*\***

**S\*\*o, the professors has been cruel enough to give us lots of homework despite it's just our second week D8 Plus, my boss at work is the same D8 But here I am, procrastinating everything hoho~ I didn't feel right for not updating in two weeks. I don't like my stories to be abandoned for too long ~.~ Btw, why Hakuouki fanfictions seem dead lately? No updates and such O\_O\*\***

**\*\*Anyway, here I am to cheer it up again hohoho~ First, I want to thank you for all the reviews! Yay I got so many this time! Should I leave it for two weeks or more again so I will get more reviews? :P Lol just kidding! I'm not that type of person XD But really, thank you very much!\*\***

**\*\*kenshin8923, haha I always love your long review and don't worry for not putting a stop to that long sentence because I really like it that way and unconsciously write like that as you can see right now :p\*\***

**\*\*mtnikolle, the culprit is...well, it could be anyone hoho \*mysterious grin\*\*\***

**\*\*reader, you're welcome! Actually I'm still in dilemma whether to give this story a happy or sad ending...\*slapped\*\*\***

**\*\*Marialena, lol I want to be Chizuru and marry Saito just if he could act a little warmer...and yeah poor Hijikata! XD\*\***

**\*\*AnonymousGuest, yeah it's way too scary D: Even if your spouse is Saito D:\*\***

**\*\*Michaela, this update is for you! :)\*\***

**\*\*AnimeAishiteru, hoho thanks for your reviews both in this story and my other one! Don't be silent anymore, ne, ne? :D And yeah you're right sometimes I feel my personality is different than the type of stories I like to write D8 Btw thanks for liking the banner for my oneshot! I guess that's the readers' favorite banner so far because I've gotten some similar comments XD Enjoy this chapter!\*\***

**\*\*Kit2000, the worst marriage had happened in Chizuru's life...poor girl...sob sob\*\***

**\*\*Halldora25, you should watch the anime as well! :D Although the game is much better XD\*\***

**\*\*starangel4379, of course I will! Thanks! :D\*\***

**\*\*Akaki, don't worry! Hope you like this chapter!\*\***

**\*\*recchinon, lol I didn't expect that someone from the same country would lurk into Hakuouki fanfictions, since it's not really popular here T\_T \*the reason why I chose to write in English to begin with\* Haha terima kasih ya reviewnya, tetaplah mengikuti perkembangan cerita ini dan tinggalkan setumpuk review buat saia yah senpai \*sembah\*\***

**\*\*lela mihalinec, wow thank you for reading them all! So happy to know another Saito x Chizuru lover! ^\_^ Although lots of people hate Chizuru, I still love her as Hakuouki's heroine :D\*\***

**\*\*Okay, that's all! Enjoy this new chapter, everybody~~\*\***

**\* \* \***

**<p><strong>BLURRED KALEIDOSCOPE<strong>**

**CHAPTER 4: RASETSU**

**\* \* \***

**<p>"I don't love you."<p>**

Normally, a groom would die in shock upon hearing such statement from his watery-eyed bride on their wedding night...But Saito Hajime was not a typical groom people usually imagineâ€”if you didn't want to call him abnormal.

Yet Chizuru didn't seem surprised as she had already gotten used to Saito's cold and emotionless face, which was illuminated by the dim light of the lone candle in their room, that was supposed to be a silent witness of the young couple's first nightâ€”though nothing happened in the end.

Even something like this couldn't make him show a little bit of expression...just what kind of man she had been married?

"Anything else?"

Wiping her tears away, Chizuru shook her head slightly. She couldn't help but feel guilty. Although actually the girl didn't want to have more conversation with this weird man, her lips parted open just to say, "Forgive me..."

"That's alright...", Saito stood up and took his black wedding haori off. Obviously it was a pain for him to wear layered clothes like that. Glancing down at his wife, he spoke quietly, "...I'm sure you're feeling tired now. How about getting some sleep? Don't worry about anything, you will surely get used to live here."

Did those words portray his concern as a husband? Or as a warrior who was given a task to protect a frail oni girl? Well, everybody knew the exact answer. However, as she saw Saito open the cabinet and take the futon out, Chizuru slid closer to him and help the young male to unfold the white bed.

Biting her lips while holding her tears back, Chizuru murmured without looking at her husband beside her, "Hajime-san...now we've reached this stage, I hope you will let me to at least become a good wife...Then, who knows if I could..."

Chizuru gulped as she tried to continue her wavering speech. She knew Saito wouldn't care about something like this. Still, as he said before, there was no turning back...

"...love you."

It was a common thing in arranged marriages; love would bloom as the time went by. And Chizuru refused to admit that she never heard of a wedding tale where someone's husband was as strange and kinda heartless as hers. She was so frustrated, but she tried to comfort herself by making a silent wish that Saito would act as a normal spouse someday.

"I truly apologize for my earlier behavior, Hajime-san..." Chizuru looked down at tatami floor in shame. "Still, as a woman, and a wife, all I could hope for isâ€"

"You..." Saito stated coldly as he took his sleeping clothes out of the closet and went to the corner of the room. Chizuru could tell that he was staring down at the two sheathed swords; a katana and a wakizashi which were placed there.

"You..know nothing about me."

"That's why!" Chizuru stood up quickly and talked to Saito's back. "I hope you would understand me! We've married, and I don't want to burden you with all the 'protection' and 'order' things! I'm your wife, and I want to know more about you..." She lowered her voice upon realizing that she had been pouring all the emotions. As a womanâ€"regardless of being the last pureblood female oni, she just wanted to have a normal marriage life...was it too much?

Slowly, Saito turned around and looked straight at Chizuru. For a second, between the reluctant light, Chizuru swore that Saito was about to say something until he swallowed whatever-it-was backâ€"or was it just the hopeful girl's illusion?



After several minutes of silence that seemed like eternity, Saito commanded, "Just change your clothes and go to sleep..." Yet before Chizuru could protest more, he added, "That's my first order to you as a husband."

People would have laughed out loud if they heard it. However, a deep wound was opening in Chizuru's heart. Probably Saito was thinking of her as a little kid who was always necessary to be protected and didn't need to voice out her unimportant nonsense.

Giving a gesture with his hand, Chizuru understood that Saito was trying to tell her to look at another direction because he wanted to change his attire. It was the most abnormal thing happened on a wedding night. However, the maiden didn't want to cry more and just nodded. Then, she herself changed into a light sleeping yukata with some pearls of tears still hanging on the corner of her eyes.

Even if she knew that Saito had beautiful bare body beneath those wedding attire, she had no desire to see it. Facing each other's back, each on the either side of their room, the newlyweds kept changing into their sleeping clothes in silence and nothingness.

"Have you finished yet?"

That deep voice was followed by a quiet 'yes' from Chizuru's tongue. Then Saito turned around to face his wife—or so it seemed. Without any other words, he pulled out the white string from his long ponytail and released the long violet curtain to spread on his back.

He slid under the warm blanket, and facing his back to Chizuru. It was clear enough that he chose to sleep on the corner of the bed so Chizuru could have wider space to rest...but the bride knew that it was not really the reason. Saito just wanted to avoid any kind of body contacts, as much as possible.

Blowing out the candle, Chizuru hesitantly lay down on the other side of the bed, and went closer to the corner as if she was still not on the bed's corner already. And yes, they were facing each other's back. There was no a warm embrace that drifted her off to sleep, or a sweet goodnight kiss.

It already happened, so the girl couldn't do anything more, nor could she protest about her life partner. Silently wishing to turn back the time and went to the moments when her parents were still alive, Chizuru almost fell asleep until she heard a whisper from behind.

"Speaking of which, you always bring a short sword..."

Just a sword-geek's curiosity, of course—at least that was what Chizuru thought. She didn't want to let her hope go high anymore.

"Yes, it's my family's heirloom..."

"Have you ever practiced swordsmanship?"

"No...but I..."

Talking without looking at each other like this was kinda frustrating. Yet it was nothing compared to the hatred and the verge of revenge which started to rise within Chizuru's heart again after so long.

"I swear to kill my parents' murderer with it."

While saying this, Chizuru gripped the blanket tight, and even tighter when she heard no response from Saito. Now that mysterious left-handed figure was haunting her again. As she managed to calm down, she looked at Saito's broad back which was covered by his long, beautiful purple hair over her shoulder.

"Hajime-san?"

Still, no answer. But upon hearing his steady and calm breath, Chizuru couldn't help but think that stupid man had fallen asleep while listening to her short speech about her kodachi, or short sword. Maybe he was dreaming about any kind of legendary sword right now? A dedicated samurai's head like him would surely be filled with swords, swords, and swords—and duties.

Letting out a sigh, Chizuru turned her head again and slowly let the comfort from the blanket sing her a lullaby. That expressionless guy was truly something, she could only hope that everything didn't go even worse than it already was.

Still, the bride of the day didn't know that her husband was still fully awake. Nobody could tell what kind of expression that somehow was glinted in those deep cerulean eyes after he finished listening to Chizuru's words. The captain of Shinsengumi's third unit was just as hard as hell to read.

And just like that, their wedding night ended...

...What could be worse?

\* \* \*

><p>The chirping sound of birds, along with the shy sunlight within chilly weather gently woke Chizuru up. While opening her eyes, she still thought that she was in a strange dream...a sudden arranged marriage, an unusual guy as her husband...yet she was brought back to reality upon finding herself in an unfamiliar bedroom.<p>

Chizuru yawned and got up from the futon in a lazy manner. After some moments, she just noticed that she was all alone. Saito was not by her side...expected, actually.

Changing into her boy's clothes—the attire that she would use from now on, Chizuru slid the door open and to her surprise, she was greeted by the infamous clown trio of Shinsengumi right after she opened the door.

"Eh? Ch-Chizuru-chan?" Harada seemed as shocked as her, then the redhead turned his glare to Shinpachi, who was about to tiptoe and leave the area of Saito's and Chizuru's room. "Shinpachi! Don't run away!"

Chizuru blinked her eyes in confusion, "...Um...what are exactly you guys doing in front of my room?"

"That's what we want Shinpachi-san to explain!" Heisuke grunted, "It was all a crazy idea from him! He was curious about how someone as serious as Saito would act on his wedding night, and decided to take a peekâ€" "

"I've never said 'to take a peek!'" The big man, who looked like the leader of the pack, pulled Heisuke's long brown hair. "I just said 'I'm curious about Saito's first night, how about if we investigate it tomorrow morning?'"

"How it makes a difference?! Shinpachi-san, you fool!" Heisuke freed his ponytail from Shinpachi's grip and punched the older man's body, ignoring Harada who was trying to find a way out to end this childish fight.

"You yourself agreed to join me!"

"...Well, I'm curious too...Hey, who on earth wouldn't feel curious when it comes to Saito being a married man?!"

"Then you're the same with me!"

"But it's your idea! You're the most guilty person here!"

"Calm down...calm down..."

"Shut up, Sano! You admitted that you want to ask Saito right away about 'it', didn't you?"

As her eyes widened in disbelief, Chizuru unconsciously let out a giggle, making the three men forget about their debate and become completely silent. They were looking at each other confusedly, but for Chizuru, their action before was enough to give her broken heart a little bit of entertainment. At least, the captains of fearsome Shinsengumi were not as scary as the rumor told.

"That's alright...", Chizuru held back her laughter. "I don't mind it."

Shinpachi's angry expression before changed into an excited grin almost instantly, "Is that right, Chizuru-chan?! Then would you tell us, did Saito do it nicely last night?!"

But a punch on the head from Harada had silenced Shinpachi. Chizuru was grateful to him, because she didn't need to answer such heart-breaking question.

Attempting to talk about another topic, Chizuru offered her help to prepare breakfast. At first, the captains refused it as they thought Chizuru should enjoy some days off after her marriage. Yet the young maiden just smiled bitterly and said that it was fine.

After all, it looked like her husband whom she just married yesterday had forgotten about her existence...

\* \* \*

><p>"I think Hajime-kun is in the training hall for his morning practice," said Okita as the emerald-eyed man gave a hand to bring some food trays.<p>

Chizuru didn't know what to say and just continued walking. So, her spouse was really a sword-geek. Stepping into the meeting room when the rest of captains had gathered, a smile played on Chizuru's lips as she saw Kodo. It was relieving to see a familiar face.

"Chizuru," Kodo returned his daughter's smile as the girl placed a tray in front of him. "I'm going back as soon as I finish breakfast. I wish you all the best for this new life."

Upon seeing uneasy expression on Chizuru's face, Kondou quickly added, "Don't worry! You can count on all of us! Besides, Yukimura-dono will come here every several days, so you could still meet your father often!"

That was right. Kodo had to come occasionally to discuss about Ochimizu. Not wanting to hear about such frightening thing anymore, Chizuru excused herself to call Saito. It looked like that man forgot about having a meal when he was training.

Before stepping out of the room, Chizuru realized that another captain had gone missing as well. She asked, "Should I call Sannan-san too?"

Weird. But Chizuru swore that the atmosphere became more serious as she finished her words. And the girl felt that it was true upon listening to Hijikata's answer.

"It's better for you not to go near him." He narrowed his eyes, "Sannan-san has acted even more strange lately."

"Toshi, that's enough." Kondou stated calmly, yet seriously, while sipping his tea.

Enough was enough. Without looking back, Chizuru exited the room and walked down the hallway, to the direction of training hall the captains told her before.

\* \* \*

><p>Before opening the door, the young maiden took a deep breath. Tardily, her small fingertips slid the wooden door and found her husband, sitting in the middle of the room with his eyes closed.<p>

Solemn, devoted atmosphere surrounded his figure for some seconds, making Chizuru's heartbeat stop for a while, until those azure eyes showed themselves. He had a real outer appearance that would make any woman kneel down and beg to marry him. Just if...

"You disturbed my training."

See? That again. To make it worse, he didn't seem like practicing swordsmanship. Probably he had finished it and did some relaxation afterwards. Meditating perhaps?

"I just came to remind you that it's already breakfast time." Chizuru felt her tone go higher against her will. There was no more polite bow for this heartless guy. Even if she apologized or whatever, he wouldn't care at all.

With those words, she left the training hall. Actually she wanted to add 'It's up to you whether you want to eat or not!' But she managed to swallow it back. Patience had a limit, and her limit had broken already by now, on their very first morning as a married couple.

\* \* \*

><p>After Kodo left, Chizuru spent her time cleaning the mansion. It was a total mess to have a bunch of men, without a woman, living together. She ignored Kondou's order to have some lovely moments with Saito...since Saito had gone to patrol despite Kondou and Hijikata had given him some days off.<p>

Everything went pretty well for the first two days. The rest of captains and soldiers were friendly...although Saito tended to ruin the mood. The couple sat side-by-side while having a meal, but they didn't talk to each other at all. They slept on the same bed, but never looked into each other's eyes at night. But as a wife, Chizuru often offered to wash Saito's clothes, though the young male always refused it and said he could do it by himself. Good for his wife. Perhaps he realized that he smelt bad with all the sweat or even worse, blood.

Still, everything was quite good for Chizuru as she started to get used to all of these...until an unexpected nightmare happened on the third night of her married life.

It was unusual for Saito to not come home in the midnight. Chizuru didn't want to worry about him or anything, but she knew that Shinsengumi Headquarters had a night curfew. And someone like Saito wouldn't want to break the rule, although he often overworked himself.

...Or was he in a secret mission? If it were true, how could he didn't tell her anything about coming home late?

Wait for a moment...just why was she thinking about him? Crap. Who cared about that idiot.

Cursing herself for being a too-good person, Chizuru almost went to sleep when suddenly, a fuss from outside brought her back to the Earth.

"Shit! I knew it's him!"

"Souji! Don't let him run away!"

"Like hell I will!"

Not good. Definitely not a good thing. Hiding under the blanket, Chizuru prayed that something bad wouldn't occur. But ironically, that silly wish was followed by a terrifying howl and maniacal laughter, that didn't belong to the Earth nor Heaven. A creature, which even the Hell refused to accept it as one of its legion.

Rasetsu.

A genius wasn't necessary to tell about the thing that was happening now. Shaking heavily, Chizuru reached and gripped her beloved kodachi—right before the door opened and revealed a white-haired, crimson-eyed creature, that looked insane due to lust of killing.

But, he was...

"...Sannan-san?" Chizuru stuttered upon seeing Sannan, who looked very different than his usual self.

"...A demon's blood..." Sannan walked closer to the frightened girl. Saliva spilling down hungrily, claw-shaped hands were ready to tear anyone who got in his way. "GIVE ME YOUR BLOOD!"

Her limbs had betrayed her. Chizuru didn't have any strength to unsheathe her sword nor scream. Eyes widened in total horror and darkness, layered by the tears. The young girl had prepared for the worst as Sannan rushed to her direction in hunger.

However...

Wet. Warm. And disgusting. Chizuru felt a bucket of strange liquid was poured down onto her. As she opened her eyelids, she saw Sannan's limp body, still standing right in front of her...The only difference was, he was covered in blood now. A glinting silver blade had went through his chest from behind.

The blade was tardily pulled out of Sannan's dead figure. As the rasetsu's body fell onto the floor, the hidden figure who had annihilated him was revealed.

As cold as the ice, and as distant as the ocean. His blue eyes scanned through the entire room, as if he was making sure that there was no other rasetsu. After that, he looked down at his blood-stained wife, who had already forgotten about even the easiest way to breathe upon witnessing all of these.

"...H-Hajime-san..." Chizuru let out an almost inaudible voice. "Why? Sannan-san...was..."

"Saito!"

Hijikata was the first to enter the room, followed by Kondou and the other captains. Inoue couldn't bear to watch Sannan's corpse, and Heisuke gritted his teeth as he saw it. The similar sad emotions were seen on the rest's faces.

However, Saito just looked as calm as ever. He slowly turned around and faced his comrades, still with Sannan's blood tainted his clothes and face. The captain of Shinsengumi's third division bowed in a polite manner to the shocked Commander and Vice-Commander.

"Mission accomplished."

"Saito..." Hijikata clenched his hands into fist. "You...you really did it."

"Of course." Saito stated calmly. "As you told me to do, I've investigated Sannan-san's strange behavior recently and it was revealed that he used some of our warriors as guinea pigs in Ochimizu experiment, the ones who were innocent and not traitors...And tonight, when I caught him with all the evidence, he drank the Ochimizu and turned..." He gazed at Sannan, "...into this."

Harada gulped, "Sannan-san...he thought the Ochimizu has been totally improved...yet he still lost his sanity."

"But Saito..." Hijikata looked straightâ€"or glared at his most loyal captain. "I never gave you a direct order to kill Sannan-san!"

"Forgive me, Vice-Commander." Still in his polite bow state, Saito continued, "But he has broken our samurai code by killing fellow soldiers. A punishment for traitors is death penalty or seppuku...And this regulation was made by you, Hijikata-san. I just did my obligation and followed it as one of the Shinsengumi captains."

The Vice-Commander of Shinsengumi couldn't say anything more. But Chizuru knew that he secretly thought that maybe the man who was talking to him now was nothing but a doll. A cruel and emotionless doll who didn't want to give mercy for everyone who betrayed the rules.

Still, Sannan was one of them, one of the highest-ranking men in Shinsengumi. They ate together, planned the strategy together, maybe laughed together before his hand-accident happened...He was different from any kind of lower soldier who became a traitor in the end.

"The rules were made to be followed by all Shinsengumi samurai, without exception." Saito lifted his head up, and slowly glanced at Chizuru over his shoulder, "Besides, Sannan-san was trying to kill the last pureblood female oni, another unforgivable thing."

Chizuru's breath was getting heavier. It was like Saito blamed her for Sannan's death. Just if she was not the last female demon...then this incident wouldn't happen...Was it the statement he actually wanted to say?

"Hey, hey, Saito!" Shinpachi scowled at Saito, "How could you say something that rude? Chizuru-chan is your wife!"

"Yes, she is," Saito spoke nonchalantly. "But also the last pureblood female oni whom we, Shinsengumi supposed to protect."

After saying those words, Saito went closer to his frozen wife. He questioned in a cold and flat tone despite he just killed a comrade and was bathed in blood, "Are you hurt?"

Anger and hatred were boiled in Chizuru's veins. This time, despite her messy and bloody appearance, despite the tears that kept spilling down, she found a bit power to take out her kodachi out of its scabbard and point it towards Saito.

"Don't touch me! You monster!"

She shouted out loud, making the other captains could just freeze in nothingness while watching her. Yet Saito just closed his eyes in solemnity and asked quietly, "What do you want then?"

"I want to go from here!" Chizuru cried, she couldn't bear it anymore. "I just want a simple life, without a monster like you as my husband!"

The girl was about to run away, not giving a crap about Hijikata and the others in the doorway. She would do anything to get out of this horrible place...yet her pace was stopped by a strong grip on her petite build, wrapping around her waist.

Thrown into a lean, muscular chest that had a strong smell of blood, Chizuru gazed up at her captor, "Hajime-san...please, let me go!"

Against her will, she raised her blade to stab Saito. She hated him so much that it could awake the demon within her.

However before she could do anything, her weapon had been already thrown away by a swift, rapid motion from Saito's katana. It was clear that she had no chance to stand against Saito. The man just needed a second to defeat herâ€”even before she made a move.

"Don't be selfish." Saito leaned closer to Chizuru, and the girl could feel his threatening breath against the pale skin of her face. And those irises...that could absorb one's soul. "It's not an easy thing for me to do. As I said before, you don't know anything about me. Just why don't you keep silent and become a good woman?"

Finally, Saito released Chizuru from his forceful embrace. It was not a comforting embrace from a life partner nor was it as calming as the melody of love songs.

Being forgotten once again, Chizuru couldn't say anything as Sannan's body was brought outside the room. One by one, the captains left and occasionally they glanced at Chizuru with concerned look. Still, they couldn't do anything to help her.

Saito was the last to exit the room. Yet before he closed the door, he whispered within the darkness of a horror night, "Don't you dare to leave this room. Not before I come back."

As the door being slammed shut, the frozen maiden dropped on her knees. All alone, with blood everywhere. Sweat and tears were falling down onto the floor. Before she knew it, she had been crying loudly while regretting her sorrowful destiny.

\* \* \*

><p><em>"I've married a monster!"<em>

\* \* \*

><p>Pulling her brown locks out in frustration, hitting the floor in desperation, she wasn't able to find any word that could portray her messed-up feeling at the moment. Just why, why, and why?<p>



\* \* \*

><p><em>"A monster, that's even worse than a rasetsu!"<em>

\* \* \*

><p><strong>So...what do you think? I feel bad for Chizuru  
D:<strong>

\*\*Thanks for reading and please leave a REVIEW! I love reviews hehe  
XD Ugh and I think I should make my homework now ~.~\*\*

\*\*Oh and before I forget, I want to ask, what's the sound effect for  
'sword against the flesh/splattering blood' in English? ~.~ Like  
'Clash!' for swords clashing...I hope I got it right. I've googled it  
and found nothing D8 Well, actually I wasn't sure of what to type on  
Google to look for something like this ~.~ I will appreciate if you  
could tell me! XD Thanks!\*\*

## 5. Sorry

\*\*I'm still alive! So here's the new chapter for you all! It's a bit  
long than usual ^\_^ \*\*

\*\*Geez I'm sooo busy like there's no tomorrow. It's 10.30pm here and  
I just came back home to post this chapter hehe :P\*\*

\*\*Aw aw awww I'm so happy to get reviews from you, guys! I'm smiling  
like idiot everytime I re-read them! Thank you sooo  
much!\*\*

\*\*kenshin8923, uh huh yeah Saito is such a bastard in this story, the  
impression I wanted to make since the beginning :P \*killed\* kyaa but  
don't worry~ I think you're going to love him as the story goes.  
Saito-san is just too gorgeous to resist! \*fangirl's squeal\* Thanks  
for the description anyway, yeah sound effect is very hard to  
describe ~.~\*\*

\*\*AnonymousGuest, I'm relieved though that Chizuru couldn't even lay  
a finger on him lol \*\*

\*\*Marialena, kyaa please don't hate Saito-san! T\_T \*crying and  
begging\*\*\*

\*\*recchinon, haha Saito's character is 'kuudere' so he's a cold  
person, but as you said, such type has a warm side which could only  
be shown to someone special XD And yeah I do agree that he's actually  
shy and warm, but covers it with his coldness O\_O\*\*

\*\*starangel4379, feel sorry for Chizuru as well D:\*\*

\*\*Lily, kyaaa just read this chapter if you're curious!\*\*

\*\*Unknown, so it's 'splech'? O\_O Never heard of it due to my terrible  
English knowledge in sound effect thingy lol. But thanks!  
^\_^\*\*

\*\*Kit2000, hoho finally you like some angst! Sooo happy! I used to  
think that you adore romantic scenes only because angst made you sad,

but now I'm happy that you liked it! Should I add more then? :D  
\*killed\*\*\*

\*\*AnimeAishiteru, hohoho of course I would comment on your reviews! I love getting reviews and I treasure every review I got! :) I'm nothing without people who read my stories~ And I think their names (including yours) should be here along with the newest chapter!  
XD\*\*

\*\*suzukitakakiblogtime, this update is for you!\*\*

\*\*Akaki, thanks! Enjoy this new chapter, ne? XD\*\*

\*\*Hohoho that's all! Please enjoy this story! Let's start reading!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>BLURRED KALEIDOSCOPE<strong>

CHAPTER 5: SORRY

\* \* \*

><p>Saito didn't come back to his room even after the dawn descended upon Kyoto, and Chizuru was unable to decide whether she was relieved or scared of being alone all night. Instead, the one who finally remembered her existence and helped her to calm down was Inoue. The old man said that Saito was busy handling this matter now, expected. Someone like him would always choose his mission first.<p>

After that nightmare, where all the lower soldiers were fooled by a fake information about Sannan being killed by Satcho men, Chizuru begged Kondou and Hijikata to at least have a separate room. She couldn't stand sharing a bed with that heartless monster any longer.

But even with bucket of tears spilling down her cheeks, the Shinsengumi executives couldn't do anything because this marriage was Lord Katamori's idea, and it was Saito's obligation to protect her and always be by her side.

Still, Chizuru was grateful because Kodo often came to Shinsengumi Headquarters. It seemed that after Sannan's death, he must handle all the Ochimizu things by himself. The doctor understood when Chizuru told him about that traumatic experience, though all he could do was telling her to be more patient.

The other captains did show their sympathies as well. Sometimes when Saito was out, they asked her to hang out together or see the lively town events to cheer the poor wife up.

To be honest, the girl was feeling uneasy now that she had known deeper about Shinsengumi's dark secret. Yet she was happy because the captains could still act as normal guys when they were together. And of course, she was thankful that they had made an attempt to comfort her and become her friends.

How about Saito himself? Well, he was still as cold and gloomy as ever. Before Chizuru knew it, it had been a week since Sannan's

tragic death. And for that long also, she had never talked to Saito even once. Chizuru tried to avoid him as much as possible and just met her husband in meal-times, also at nights when they were about to sleep.

Odd? Yes. But that was how a marriage life for the poor maiden...

...Until one day, when she was spacing out in the middle of garden, abruptly there was sound of footsteps. She was pretty shocked at first, thinking that it might be the last person she wanted to meet at the moment. But the fear was quickly switched by relief as she turned around.

"Kondou-san! Inoue-san! You scared me!" The young girl bowed and smiled at the newcomers; Kondou and Inoue. Both men were father-like figures of Shinsengumi, and sometimes Chizuru didn't believe that people like them could kill the enemies without mercy when needed.

Kondou chuckled lightly, "Sorry to disturb you...Anyway, mind if we want to have a talk with you now?"

Even a fool could guess what the conversation topic might be. Trying not to show any kind of dissatisfaction, Chizuru prepared some tea as they were sitting on the bench under sakura tree, which had started to bloom.

"About Saito..." Kondou opened the conversation, and although Chizuru pouted at first, she respected Kondou and attempted to listen to his words. "We, Shinsengumi hopes you can forgive him. It's not that we're okay with Sannan-san's death...But it's just the way Saito is as our most loyal captain. I admit that sometimes his loyalty is too extreme, as you can see. But really, there's always a reason behind it."

Chizuru retorted in wavering voice as that scary experience was replayed in her mind again, "Kondou-san...I've tried to talk to him. I was willing to understand him as my husband, yet he didn't even care about my existence. And now he did that horrible thing to his own comrade..." Her tears fell, and mingled with the soil below. "I don't know what to do anymore...Why always me?"

Sobbing in sorrow, Chizuru wasn't able to hold back her emotions. Although her parents wouldn't be happy as they saw this from above, and Chizuru herself used to be a cheerful person, now she felt that she was the most pitiful person in the world.

"Our Commander was right." Inoue pat the sad girl's shoulder gently. "Saito-kun has his own reason which resulted such great loyalty to us...Maybe you still don't know about this yet, but Shinsengumi is the only place where he could find his real self."

Wiping her tears away, Chizuru turned her eyes to the old kind man, "What do you mean by that, Inoue-san?"

Looking at each other, Kondou and Inoue glanced at the sky, as if they were remembering the old times. After a quite long time, Kondou said quietly, "I remembered when Saito came to my dojo for the first time..."

"Yes, he had an amazing fight with Souji," Inoue let out a small chuckle. "And he was really surprised that we praised him as a skilled warrior and didn't laugh at him for being left-handed."

Again, that 'left-handed' thing, another nightmare. While Chizuru trying to think of it as different matter, Inoue continued, "He never talked much about his past, even until now. But once Saito told us that he was exiled from his clan because he killed a hatamoto who challenged him in duel."

"Why? I mean...it was a legal duel and Hajime-san should have been crowned as the winner," Chizuru asked, now she was starting to feel curious about her life partner.

Inoue smiled bitterly, "He couldn't, because he's a left-handed samurai, which was considered as disgrace...Fighting with left hand is not a right thing, and a left-handed samurai shouldn't exist to begin with. But Saito...he ignored instruction from his coach to fix that fighting stance, and kept his own unique style. Everybody mocked him, but no one of them could beat him in a match."

"Still, nobody respects his skill, except Shinsengumi." Kondou tilted his head to the side and a smile touched his lips, "Because we have a belief that everybody, no matter who you are and where you're from, has the same right to become a true samurai."

As she listened to their words carefully, Chizuru couldn't help but feel guilty. She kept assuming that she had the most sorrowful fate in the world, yet she couldn't imagine how Saito could survive with all those rejections in his younger days. On top of that, his left-handedness which she feared of was unexpectedly the source of his suffering.

Chizuru questioned once again, "But...how about his parents?"

"His parents..." Kondou let out a heavy sigh. "As far as I'm concerned, they had refused him too. He was a disgrace in the family. They tried to change his fighting style, but it looks like Saito had had a true samurai spirit since very young age...He chose to stand in his belief until the end."

A drop of tear unconsciously dropped from Chizuru's eye corner. But this time, it was a tear for someone else and not for her own ego. Upon hearing this, her heart softened. She couldn't imagine the misery Saito had gone through when his own family rejected him. Even though herself had lost her beloved parents in tragic way, at least she had lots of good memories with them.

Well, Chizuru was raised as a good woman after all. Perhaps she was just too kind, but she couldn't hate a person for too long...except her parents' murderer.

\* \* \*

><p><em>"You know nothing about me."<em>

\* \* \*

><p>Saito's statement was right. She knew nothing. She tried to talk with him, he refused it, then she gave up as well. Now she realized that she should have learned about Saito's personality before making a conclusion that he was only a cruel monster.<p>

\* \* \*

><p><em>"It's not an easy thing for me to do. As I said before, you don't know anything about me."<em>

\* \* \*

><p>Maybe it was the same as the small cherry blossom bud that was about to bloom and grace the entire town. Maybe...just maybe, he only needed someone to understand him well, to make him open his heart. As this thought crossed Chizuru's mind, the once sleeping cheerful and positive trait within herself began to wake up and rise to the surface.<p>

"Thank you for telling me all of these, Kondou-san, Inoue-san!" Chizuru gave them a deep bow before leaving with high spirit, wide smile on her face.

Looking at the girl's retreating back, Kondou's lips curved into a small smile, "Gen-san...finally I see something good coming."

"Yes, they are husband and wife after all." Inoue sipped his warm green tea. "If Saito-kun didn't want to talk it over, let us be the ones who told her about him. He deserves happiness, and I believe Chizuru could give it to him...The same goes for Chizuru, I'm more than sure Saito-kun will protect her with all his heart someday."

Glancing at the sakura tree above their heads, Kondou witnessed the once shy closed buds had opened up slightly, revealing a little bit of hidden beauty within.

"It will take time, Gen-san. Especially for someone like Saito."

Putting down the ceramic mug on the bench, Inoue smiled and fixed his gaze on a full-bloomed sakura flower. The only one that looked like the goddess of spring between the bushes of half-bloomed blossoms.

"Yes, but it's not impossible. Not impossible at all."

\* \* \*

><p>It was a lie if Chizuru said that her fear of her own husband had completely gone away. But someone must take an action first or else this horrible marriage situation would stay forever. One night, after gathering all of her courage, Chizuru waited for Saito's return and tightened her grip on her sleeping yukata as the door slid open.<p>

"Welcome back, Hajime-san..." She heard her own shaking voice. But the young male just nodded slightly without looking at his wife, and went to the closet instead to change his clothes.

Not caring much about Saito who was changing his attire behind her back, Chizuru whispered, "S-Sorry..." For a moment, she bit her lips as she realized that Saito must have been the one who apologized. Yet she also recognized her own mistake. "...I almost stabbed you and called you 'monster' that night. I-I know I was wrong but I couldn't control my emotion. I'm really soâ€œ"

"Emotions..." A cold whisper from behind made her jolt, yet it was nothing compared to the owner of the voice who suddenly took a sitting position in front of her. "We don't need them in duties. Such thing would only get in the way."

Biting her lips even harder, Chizuru tried to stay calm while facing this man, "But Hajime-san, have you ever felt happy before? Do you remember the last time you laughed? They're all emotions, right? And we need them to enjoy the life..."

Chizuru didn't know whether it was true or just an illusion from the dim candlelight, but she realized she had talked too much as a hint of gasp was shown on Saito's face. Quickly she added, "Oh, I'm sorry! I didn't mean toâ€œ"

"No need to apologize everytime," said Saito quietly, but with steel in his tone. "It's not necessary if you're sure that you have said a right thing."

Slowly, Saito stood up, letting his soft and loose long hair touch Chizuru's head. With a sigh, he spoke in a low, somehow sad tone as he looked down at his wife, "I've been living with swords for a long time. The way of the sword is my choice of life. It's up to you to choose any kind of lifestyle since each person has their own principles about life. There's no really a right or wrong thing in this matter...So, if you voice out the truth you believe in, you don't have to apologize."

Strange. But in one way and another, Chizuru felt relaxed as she heard those words coming from Saito's tongue. Probably he wanted to say that he didn't mindâ€œor didn't care about their principal difference. Yet at the same time, he also tried to tell Chizuru that he had chosen his own lifestyle, and the girl didn't have rights to change it. Fifty-fifty for them. The end.

But it was not right for Chizuru, definitely not a right thing. As she slowly turned around and crawled forward to the bed, where Saito's back had already faced her, she was wondering if 'the way of the sword' was really the best lifestyle for him...How could someone only live by missions?

Sliding under the warm blanket, Chizuru muttered quietly, "Hajime-san, mind if I tag along in your patrol tomorrow?"

That broad back tensed for some seconds. It was obvious that Saito was surprised with Chizuru's sudden statement, while the girl didn't even want to talk with him the day before. In fact, Chizuru herself didn't know where she had gotten this courage. Perhaps it was only a wife's natural feeling, or merely responsibility to erase her regret. She wasn't sure.

"You..."

"You said that I can voice out my mind, right?"

"..."

"Hajime-san?"

"...Do as you wish. Just don't get in my way."

With those words, their conversation ended. But a smile found its way to Chizuru's lips. Maybe Saito's behavior was influenced by his too-strict way of life. She didn't say it as a wrong thing, but not right also. He just needed to balance duties with personal life...At least, that was what Chizuru thought.

Not sure whether Saito just tried to teach her about his chosen lifestyle, or unconsciously opened up a bit hidden part of himself, Chizuru felt grateful that she decided to talk it over with her husband. Secretly, she sent the deepest gratitude to Kondou and Inoue.

Gazing at the sleeping warrior's back, Chizuru didn't turn her body around like she usually did. She fixed her caramel eyes on Saito's figure until her eyelids tardily slid shut, marking the end of the young maiden's curiosity and a silent prayer to know her spouse better.

\* \* \*

><p>Shinpachi's eyes almost popped up and Heisuke's jaw dropped literally as they saw Chizuru left with Saito after breakfast. The girl let out a giggle as the captains couldn't believe her decision to keep Saito company, while Saito himself didn't seem to care and walked quickly before they started making any hot gossip.<p>

First day, the impression Chizuru got from her husband was a stern, overworking but also a calm captain. He didn't talk much, but it seemed the third division already had some kind of emotional bond with their leader. They loved their captain even though Chizuru accidentally heard a conversation of how Saito often added their patrol time.

Second day, third day...one week. Now Chizuru began to see the real Saito. He was not as heartless as she thought. At least she saw him help people in needs...maybe he considered it as duty, but as a glint of satisfaction gracing his features, Chizuru knew that he did it wholeheartedly.

"What's so funny?" Saito's voice snapped her back to reality. Tilting her head to the side, Chizuru sent him a genuine smile, "You're right about me didn't know anything about you. So, thank you for the opportunity you gave me to know you better..."

Upon seeing his wife's innocent and pure expression of happiness, Saito gasped. Who on earth gave her a chance to know him better? All he did was only allowing her to tag along in patrol. Just several weeks ago, she cried on their wedding night and tried to kill him afterwards...but now, she was totally different already.

Sighing slightly, Saito didn't know what to say. Probably it was him

who couldn't understand herâ€”and more normal ways of life. As Chizuru kept on talking in high spirit about how she would try to be a good wife, Saito just let the words go. He didn't understand how a person could be this positive. For him, letting too-positive emotions dominate his heart would only result a disappointment in the end. On top of that, who needed a good wife? He only married her for Shinsengumi's mission...and also...

"Ah!"

Something bumped into his back. The young man didn't need to turn around to know what it was. That rather spoiled wife was talking too much that she stumbled upon a stone and thanks to his back, she didn't end up kissing the ground.

Pinching the bridge of her nose, Chizuru bowed in nervous manner, "Sorry, Hajime-san!"

Saito turned his blue eyes to Chizuru over his shoulder, "How many times should I tell you? Don't say 'Sorry' so easily...It lowers your dignity. You didn't do a great mistake that requires a forgiveness, after all."

Nodding a few times, Chizuru walked beside her spouse while swearing not to do embarrassing thing again. But as if the fate mocked her, her stomach let out an annoying growling sound all of a sudden.

Face as red as tomato, Chizuru pretended to look at another way when Saito and the third division soldiers stared at her. Some of them were laughing. The other half were trying to silence their comrades, afraid of the captain would punish them all for laughing at his wife.

But Saito didn't wear any expression as he went closer to the embarrassed girl. At first, Chizuru thought Saito would scold her or anything...Hence she was really surprised when suddenly Saito motioned his head slightly, telling her to follow him to another direction while giving order to his subordinates, "We've finished our patrol for today, you guys may go back. I'll catch up with you later since I have something to do now."

The warriors seemed glad because they didn't need to patrol for extra hours like usual. Honestly it wasn't needed because soon their shift would be replaced by another unit. It was just their too-serious captain who told them to carry on duty with all their hearts.

However, today was different. After the soldiers went back home, the couple walked together side-by-side. With shy gesture, the blushing wife took a glimpse at her husband beside her. Now there were just both of them, in the middle of a lively town with fleeting cherry blossom petals gently touched their skin within the spring breeze.

"Um...Hajime-san, where are we going?" Chizuru questioned hesitantly.

Saito was silent for a long moment. He was a type of man who would fit in the darkness of the night...but now, somewhat Chizuru saw another side of him as the young captain let a sakura petal fall onto



his palm. That silky lavender hair, a pair of eyes that had the color of the ocean, and his elegant white scarf which flowing along with the wind made a beautiful harmony as he moved.

"If you're hungry, then just eat." Saito stated as they entered a dango shop, their final destination which made Chizuru kinda surprised, again.

Something sweet was always a perfect choice after the long walk. And speaking of which, this was their first time eating together when there were only both of them. Praying that her stomach wouldn't growl for the second time and trying to get rid of this awkward silence, Chizuru reached her inner pocket and after some moments, she cursed her stupidity for not bringing her purse. Really, another bad luck in the most embarrassing day.

"Don't worry..." As though her mind was being read, the man sitting before her just spoke calmly while sipping his tea. "It's my treat."

Unsure of what to say next, Chizuru gave an obedient nod to her husband as the waitress came over and placed their order on the table. While chewing the dango, sometimes the pink blossoms brought by the breeze entered the shop through the gap of wooden windows.

Following her natural instinct as a cheerful girl, Chizuru caught some flying petals, and made a disappointed face when they escaped her palms and landed onto the table instead. She smiled and showed the ones she got to Saito, "Hajime-san! Look! They're so pretty!"

Saito frowned, and cruel realization hit Chizuru. Now she just noticed that she had acted so childish in front of the very face of a man who thought emotions were useless.

Still, maybe at last the fortune decided to prevail after a row of bad luck. Thinking that her sight was deceiving her, Chizuru's big chocolate eyes blinked rapidly in disbelief as she saw—"for the first time"—a tiny, but no doubt it was genuine, smile lined Saito's moist lips.

"You're right..." He whispered, while his fingertips playing with some stray sakura petals on the table. "They're pretty...and calming as well."

The heat was rising on Chizuru's cheeks, resulting deep pink blush in the process. She spoke in almost inaudible voice, looking straight at Saito, "Hajime-san...you're smiling."

"Hm?" Saito lifted his head and returned Chizuru's gaze. But that smile, was now wider and had never left his handsome face. "Is it that strange?"

"See?!" The girl was so excited that she forgot they were in a public place. "That's what I mean with happiness! You can even find happiness in small things like these beautiful petals! You got what I meant before, right? Hajime-san, you should open your heart more so you can smile more often!"

Those words dropped Saito's smile, and upon noticing that all the

guests were staring at them now, the noisy couple left the store after Saito put some money to pay.

However, Chizuru didn't feel regret. Even if she knew that Saito's smile would vanish when he heard that statement, she would have still spoken it out loud. It was up to him whether he wanted to call her childish, spoiled, or whatever. Perhaps she was just too kind, but she couldn't deny that the feeling which overwhelmed her heart right now was pure happiness. A happiness for being able to help a person, although the person himself didn't feel like he was lost in gloomy world and such.

"It's not your business," Saito sent his wife a glare outside the store. "For me, happiness isâ€"

"Yes, I know," Chizuru grinned, satisfaction filled her heart. "Sorry, okay?"

Despite his cold expression which slowly coming back, despite his heartless behavior a few weeks before, now Chizuru understood that she really knew nothing about her husband before...and now, she was hoping to transform this once-dreadful arranged marriage into a real beautiful bond every woman could dream of.

\* \* \*

><p>The cherry blossom trees had blossomed as well in Shinsengumi courtyard. Nobody would expect that it was the same place where Ochimizu secret project was held- a thing that Chizuru actually wanted to forget.<p>

Smiling blissfully, Chizuru enjoyed the beauty of nature. The only difference with the time before was, she was alone now. Saito was away for several days due to a secret mission, which Chizuru didn't want to know the details of. She knew Saito was often trusted with top-secret missions because of his loyalty and amazing swordsmanship.

Closing her eyelids, Chizuru wished all the best for a certain man somewhere out there. It helped a lot to think they were under the same big sky...Wait, it was so weird that once she wished him to die and go away from her life, yet now she didn't feel right without him by her side. And before she knew it, she had been a married woman for one month.

The sun went down and the pure-white full moon showed itself. After washing the dishes from dinner, Chizuru walked towards her room and found an empty bedroom, as usual. But it didn't feel right...something was just not right...

Chizuru had laid down on the futon as she stared at the ceiling. Without someone lying by her side, it felt cold...And even though the man himself was a cold person, and he only showed his back to her every night...Oh no, she shouldn't think that way. It was true that she was learning to be a good wife, but she must also know the risk of being a wife of a top-ranked samurai.

While silently counting cats in her brain in an attempt to sleepâ€"but subconsciously ended up counting Saito instead, Chizuru heard a tiny sound of a door being opened. Tilting her head to the

direction of the sound, her eyes widened in great surprise and she quickly got up from the bed to welcome the familiar purple-haired man who just came in.

"Hajime-san!" She ran towards Saito, not caring about her messy hair or sleeping yukata. "Welcome baâ€"Ah!"

Enthusiasm filled her heart all of a sudden, and that was the source of her fallâ€"\_almost\_. Before her face hit the floor, a pair of strong hands had caught and thrown her into a strong chest.

"Really..." Saito sighed as he wrapped his arms around Chizuru's body protectively. "I don't know what's on your mind. Just how many times should I catch you? I just came back and youâ€"What's wrong?"

The samurai narrowed his eyes while glancing down at his wife, who was holding his body tight as if she didn't want to let him go again. She buried her face on his chest, and upon feeling the wet sensation, Saito knew that she was crying against his body.

"Hey..." Saito murmured confusedly. "I don't do anything bad this time, do I?"

"...Yes, you don't." In a weak movement, Chizuru glanced at her husband, but her hands had never loosened the embrace. "Welcome back, Hajime-san." Then she giggled, "You smell bad. I'm going to wash your clothes later."

A tiny, almost unnoticeable chuckle escaped Saito's throat, "I haven't cleaned up yet. It's your fault for running into me all of a sudden. And don't worry, I'll do the laundry myself as always."

"I don't care...Let me do it once in a while." A relieved smile, full of bliss lined Chizuru's lips. This was her second time of being in Saito's embrace, but the feeling was totally different from then.

Now she knew the cause of this feeling...She was not worried about his safety or something like that. She just missed him. That was all.

\* \* \*

><p>Under the warm blanket, Chizuru fixed her brown irises on Saito's back before her. He seemed really tired and absolutely needed a good rest. Probably it was the reason he didn't get angry when she greeted his return in such spoiled way? The girl herself felt a bit ashamed now.<p>

But to her surprise, suddenly Saito turned his body around to face her. His alluring eyes somehow twinkling within the darkness of the room, as gorgeous as the rare blue diamonds. While Chizuru pulling the blanket up to her nose in an attempt to hide the blush on her face, Saito's lips parted open slightly, whispering something inaudible.

Chizuru frowned and slid closer to him, "Forgive me, but I can't hear you, Hajime-san."

Placing his pure eyes onto his wife, Saito spoke with nothing but a low whisper, "...I made you scared before, didn't I?"

"Oh...that...", Chizuru gulped, but tried to calm herself down, "Don't worry, I've tried to forget it. Because as I said before, I want to understand yâ€" "

"...Sorry..."

"...Eh? What?"

"Sorry, Chizuru..."

With that statement, Saito closed his eyelids, ignoring Chizuru's eyes which was widening in disbelief upon hearing the word 'sorry' from his tongue.

Other than that...

"Hajime-san..." She didn't know whether Saito could hear her or not, as the warrior looked like asleep already.

"...It's the first time you called my name."

Although Saito just slept casually as if nothing special happened, but for the first time in their marriage life, he let Chizuru see his calm sleeping face. And the smiling girl was wondering what dream was hidden behind that charming, serene face.

"I've forgiven you."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>I've tortured Chizuru in the previous chapters, so I guess I have to make something more relaxing in this one XD<strong>

\*\*Since it's already late here, I'm going to sleep now and I hope I could see a bunch of REVIEWS when I wake up hehe~ I need your feedbacks, guys! :)\*\*

\*\*Thanks for reading~ love you all!\*\*

## 6. Nightmare

\*\*YEAH...YOU'RE NOT DREAMING...\*\*

\*\*I...really...updated...this...story...\*faints\*\*\*

\*\*OH MY GOD I'm terribly sorry for this super late update! I've abandoned it for 3 weeks! Almost one month actually...I've been super-very-extremely busy with work and school thingy. To make it worse, my midterms are coming in a week T\_T I also haven't had time to buy and play the new Hakuouki game! Damn I want to play as Saito so much! And I love how he let his hair down in Hakuouki: Warriors of the Shinsengumi. \*\*

\*\*I feel really guilty...you may punch or kick me, but please don't kill me because you won't see the continuation if you do that hehe :P  
\*killed\*\*\*

\*\*Anyway, so many things happened in this website while I was away. Now we can add up to 4 characters while the previous one just limited to 2. But I don't plan to change it~ enough with Saito and Chizuru because they are the essential characters here XD\*\*

\*\*Although it's very late, I still want to thank the reviewers who had spared their time to review the previous chapter  
^\_\*\*\*

\*\*Marialena, yeah finally the good thing has started to prevail...but don't feel relieved yet. You need to read this chapter first  
hoho\*\*

\*\*AnonymousGuest, cute! cute! Saito and his silent concern is cute in every way! XD\*\*

\*\*XxSillyKittyxX, haha you'll see what's gonna happen in this one :3 I'm glad you liked it but I also feel sad that there's not many people who wrote Hakuouki stories...D: I hope people will notice this fandom more one day\*\*

\*\*kenshin8923, sleeping Saito! Who could refuse it! \*fangirl's scream\* Lol and I'm happy you enjoyed the lovey-dovey moments between them XD I guessed Chizuru really deserves a little bit of happiness after all the bad luck :3\*\*

\*\*Unknown, you're also a fantastic reader! Enjoy this update!  
^\_\*\*\*

\*\*Kit2000, don't worry, Chikage is not forgotten :P Kyaaa and noo I'm not that cruel XD...at least in the previous chappie hehe \*sly smile\*\*\*

\*\*AnimeAishiteru, I also wish to be Chizuru! I wanna marry Saito! XD Ahh and sorry again for making you wait, don't kill me! \*running away\* But it's a great coincidence! I was writing this chapter when I got your second review today! Thank you so much for the encouragement  
^\_^ You're a great reader and so are the others! ^\_\*\*\*

\*\*reader, I'm also happy to make such positive progress, but now I kinda miss the angst...Let's add some spices! XD\*\*

\*\*Alright...I know if I ramble for a second more, you're going to hit me D: So for now, I will let you read this chapter without any disturbance XD Just don't forget to review, ne?\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>BLURRED KALEIDOSCOPE<strong>

CHAPTER 6: NIGHTMARE

\* \* \*

><p><em>"All samurai are the same..."<em>

\_"Do you want to kill us?"\_

\_"..."\_

\_"Just kill us..."\_

\_"We can't stand this pain any longer..."\_

\_"..."\_

\_"Kill us..."\_

\_"...please..."\_

\* \* \*

><p>Saito's eyes sprang open. In a rapid and rough movement, he got up from the bed and needed several seconds to realize that he was still in his own room. Exhaustion from the mission that had drifted him to peaceful sleep before had gone, replaced with mixture of emotions which people wouldn't expect Saito Hajime could feel.<p>

"Hajime-san?"

Hadn't fully sober yet, now another heart attack hit Saito mercilessly as Chizuru called his name and pushed herself up. The young girl's sleepy eyes blinked in innocent manner while looking at her husband, who didn't seem like his usual self at the moment. Saito was sweating heavily, trembling as he slowly turned his azure irises on Chizuruâ€"even those eyes wasn't as penetrating as usual.

"...Did I...disturb your sleep?" Saito asked in a hoarse voice, his chest heaving roughly as though the whole air was taken away from his lungs. Cold sweat drenched his thin white sleeping yukata, revealing the perfect contour of his muscles.

Chizuru shook her head, "No...Don't worry about that. By the way, what's wrong? Did you have a nightmare?"

It was a shame for the Shinsengumi captain to admit that he did have a nightmare. However, it was not a common oneâ€"something like being chased by a rasetsu or whatever. There was no way such thing could make Saito even shiver. Instead, it was...

"I'm alright." Saito stated, attempting to look tough, yet his throat just produced a weak voice. "Maybe I'm just tired..."

Saito was about to lie down back, but this time, he refused to face Chizuru. He was taking a sleeping position where his back would face her like in their first time of marriage life. But before his still shaking back touched the futon, a sudden pair of hands had pulled his body back to sitting position and gave him a warm embrace.

"What are youâ€"?!" Saito's eyes widened in surprise as Chizuru circled her hands around his figure tightly. Such thing was unpredictable, and who on earth dared to embrace the fearsome Saito Hajime? Even if she was his wife?

Chizuru glanced up at him in concern. The young male's violet locks

fell to her face, dripping off some pearls of sweat. Yet they looked like tears at the same time. Something wasn't right.

Smiling slightly, Chizuru said, "My mother used to hug me whenever I had a nightmare...and it worked like charm." As she remembered the good old times, she continued, "That's why, you don't need to feel ashamed to admit it. It's normal and I will just hold you like this if you're feeling afraid."

"I never feel afraid." Saito spoke coldly, struggling a bit to release himself but Chizuru didn't want to free him. "I only woke up in the midnight. You don't need to sweat the small stuff. I just need to sleep again then I will feel better."

Expected. Someone like Saito would say such words. But Chizuru refused to be small-minded again. Now she had known Saito for a longer time, and found a fact that he wasn't as heartless as she thought before, the maiden somehow knew that her spouse had a hidden warm side within.

"Then..." Chizuru's fingertips lingered on Saito's shoulder blades, giving him a calming touch. "I will hold you like this until you fall asleep."

"Who do you think youâ€œ"

"I'm your wife. And it's wife's duty to calm her husband down when he's afraid after having a nightmare."

"...How many times should I tell you that I'm not scared? And don't use the word 'duty' so easily. It's more serious thanâ€œ"

"Hajime-san..." Chizuru murmured as she placed her head on Saito's well-toned chest and listened to his fast, unsteady heartbeat. "Just let me do it. You will feel better. I promise."

After some moments, Saito gave up. He let Chizuru embrace him for a little longer and treat him like a kid. It was a good thing that she didn't do any additional silly stuff like singing a lullaby for him. Other than that, somehow Saito knew that his wife was remembering her mother as she did this.

Speaking of which, how did it feel to have a kind mother? Even as a young boy, he was already rejected by his family due to his left-handedness. And not too long after he was exiled from the village, he heard his parents had passed away. The cause? Maybe they were being killed, or because of some disease. He didn't know, and he didn't want to know since the man himself didn't feel like having parents to begin with.

However this time, a young woman who had been his wife for just a month gave him the first embrace he ever felt in his life. And although Saito hated to admit it...yes, it gave a peaceful, serene sensation.

This maiden...she was just too positive, cheerful, and innocent, even after something or someone took her happiness away in such a cruel way.

"Chizuru..." Unconsciously, Saito buried his face in Chizuru's chesnut hair which had the aroma of fresh-bloomed cherry blossoms. But as he secretly enjoyed the tranquil atmosphere, Chizuru's arms fell to the side all of a sudden before he voiced out any other words.

Widening his eyes in great shock, Saito caught the girl's frail form, "Chizuru!" There was no response, but after some seconds that seemed like eternity, Saito realized that Chizuru had accidentally fallen asleep while holding his body.

Really, this girl kept giving him a headache. Just a few minutes before, she said that she would wait until he fell asleep first...But now, she threw another heart attack at him, made him think that something bad had occurred again...

Gently, Saito laid Chizuru's body down onto the bed. As he looked at her angelic sleeping face, he knew that he almost lost himself because of that nightmare...Oh, didn't he say that it wasn't a nightmare? And although Chizuru insisted that it was, Saito didn't tell a lie actually...

...Because it was not a mere dream. It was an old memory, which really happened before. A reality that Saito wanted to forget as he slowly took a sleeping position beside Chizuru, and turned his back on her as if he didn't have a courage to face his own wife.

She was just too pure. She forgave him easily even though he had scared her so much. She attempted to care about him after all the bad things he had done. She wanted to be a good wife, a spouse for lifetime to a cold man who didn't even care about her existence before.

That was why, she didn't need to know about it, the fact that she had guessed wrongly...What made Saito acting weird before was not fear. Ah, how could you expect the top-ranked samurai named Saito Hajime quivering in fear? It was absolutely not fear. Perhaps it was something else...What was it called again?

Oh, guilt.

\* \* \*

><p>"The Satcho has tried our patience again!"<p>

Emergency meeting right after breakfast was not a pleasant thing. But lately, it had been Shinsengumi's morning routine. It looked like the rivalry between Aizu, the Shogunate side and Satcho, the supporters of Emperor was getting worse in every second.

Last night, Heisuke's division captured some Satcho samurai who were making a plan to kill the Shogun directly. Crazy idea, yes, but sadly it was not impossible. It was great that the most talented spy of Shinsengumi, Yamazaki, managed to eavesdrop their dirty plan and tell the Shinsengumi executives before anything became too late.

Hijikata clenched his fist in anger, "They've gone too far...I always thought they would prefer to fight us first as honorable samurai. I never expected they're just a bunch of cowards who's seeking for alternative instant way."



"Maybe they're just bored with this never-ending war, Hijikata-san," Heisuke retorted seriously as the captain who was in charge in this case. "After all, they are longing to see the Emperor as this country's single ruler. And with us standing in their way, probably Satcho has been tired and finally decided to quicken their steps, even though it means using stupid way as well."

"Stupid...and careless," Hijikata stood up and voiced out his anger. "They have underestimated us! Did they think it's an easy matter to kill the Shogun?! Did they know who the elite force, Shinsengumi is?!"

Silence filled the room, and Chizuru felt her body shiver as she placed the tea cups in front of the captains. If she could choose, she would rather not listen to this conversation. In her heart, she had silently wished to exit the room after serving the tea.

"Heisuke," Hijikata broke the uncomfortable silence. "Take care of those bastards."

Like he was choked by his own spit, the youngest captain of Shinsengumi widened his eyes in disagreement, "Eh? By 'take care', you mean 'it'?! They're still in the warehouse, aren't they? No way! I don't want to witness such scary transformation!"

"Heisuke!" Harada grabbed Heisuke's long ponytail and covered his mouth. At first the others didn't understand, they just thought maybe Harada was angry because Heisuke talked like a loser, yet after some moments they knew it wasn't the case as Harada glanced at the trembling Chizuru in concern.

Rasetsu. It was a nightmare for Chizuru. Yet by Heisuke's words, she knew that Hijikata wanted those captured men to be turned into rasetsu. She liked the Shinsengumi's men, but she hated this dark secret so much.

"Chizuru..." A familiar flat voice brought her back from the trance. "You may leave now."

Saito didn't need to ask her to do so. She gave a quick bow to the captains and stepped out of the meeting room. But before she closed the door, Chizuru remembered something and smiled between the gap, "Hajime-san, don't push yourself too hard today, okay?"

With those words, the door was closed. Trying to ignore Okita who was starting to dig any hot news, or Kondou and Inoue who glanced at each other while chuckling suspiciously, Saito stood up and turned his eyes at Hijikata, "Vice-Commander, if Heisuke doesn't want it. Let me be the one who takes care of this matter."

"Yeah, of course," Okita smirked teasingly. "We have this 'Hajime-san' who's always there to take the dirtiest work."

Gazing at his most loyal subordinate, Hijikata let out a sigh, "Saito...I always give nasty jobs to you."

"That's alright...I will do anything for Shinsengumi's sake," Saito declared in determination and bowed politely to the Vice-Commander.

After that, he walked out of the room, ready to take care of Shinsengumi's secret mission.

As the door slowly slid shut, Shinpachi muttered quietly, "That Saito...I can't tell what's on his mind. He should've spent more time with Chizuru-chan rather than taking care of something like this forever."

"Ah, but it looks like their relationship is getting better!" Heisuke exclaimed in enthusiasm. "Yesterday I saw Chizuru washing Hajime-kun's clothes, which never happened before!"

"Shut up Heisuke, it's your fault that Saito must take care of your duty."

"Sano-san! If you were me, would you gladly go to that mad place?!"

"I..."

Harada couldn't say anything to object. That particular warehouse was not only a scary place where living people were treated like experimental animals. It was not a big case if they were the captured enemies...but many friends-turned-into-traitors had died there as well while losing their sanity. Now Sannan had gone, only one person who was brave enough to go there without being overwhelmed in emotions. Even the strict Hijikata who made the Shinsengumi rules could just curse his hidden weakness within.

\* \* \*

><p>The willowy wind played with his hair, somehow wanted to chase away the lavender curtain which hiding his handsome face beneath. One by one, the flower petal fell onto his figure graciously and let the spring nature become a perfect backdrop. If there were a painter passing by, he would rejoice and eternalize that rare, beautiful moment into a masterpiece.<p>

However, now he was walking towards a place which looked like the hell on earth. His fingertips found their place on the thick wooden door—it was not locked, meaning there was another person in there already.

With unpleasant creak, the door was opened. In contrast with the morning spring landscape outside, this place was nothing but a dark area, with only some small candles brightened up the room.

"You're here, Saito."

Tilting his head to the source of the voice, Saito narrowed his blue eyes and walked forward to the old man who was mixing some fishy potion into glass bottles, "Yukimura-dono, you come here more often recently."

Kodo let out a tiny chuckle, "Yes...thanks to Lord Katamori who provides me with some guardians everytime I need to come here, although it's kinda difficult to sneak in from the back door..." He laughed a bit and continued, "After all, Chizuru doesn't need to know that I often come as a mad scientist of Aizu. If she were to see me, I want her to look at me as a normal father...Speaking of which, how

is she?"

"She's fine. You don't need to worry," Saito replied emotionlessly. But abruptly their conversation was disturbed by a terrifying, yet weak howl.

Immediately, Saito fixed his gaze on the white-haired, red-eyed creature chained onto the wall. Not only one, but there were three...or four of them. At least four at this time, and they were all Satcho men. That Heisuke brat was just brave enough to throw them in here last night, but not having more guts to see their inhuman transformation.

Saito couldn't blame him, though. But someone must take care of this problem or else the Ochimizu project wouldn't be finished. With one swift motion, Saito unsheathed his katana and pointed it towards the neck of a rasetsu. Unlike the usual case, where the creature would laugh maniacally or move uncontrollably, this time he shivered in fear upon looking at the young captain before him.

"Kill me...", He gulped, suddenly shouted as if he lost his sanity, and regained it back after some seconds. "I can't stand this pain anymore..."

A flash of memories was playing in Saito's mind upon hearing thatâ€”the one that had become a nightmare. But don't call him as the captain of Shinsengumi's third division if he couldn't act professionally.

Turning his body around to face Kodo once again, he whispered, "I will report this to Kondou-san and Hijikata-san. Looks like you've succeeded in improving the Ochimizu, Yukimura-dono."

A smile of satisfaction found its way to Kodo's lips, "My son-in-law is really smart. Yes, as you can see...the possibility of them being crazy has been successfully reduced. We're just one step closer to make a group of perfect and obedient rasetsu warriors."

"Kodo...you're traitor!" One of other rasetsu shouted all of a sudden, struggling to free himself from the bound but it didn't give any positive result, "Don't think that Satcho leaders will let you out so easily! On top of that, Kazama-sama will definitely kill you for betraying the demon clan and taking away his bride!"

It was all he could speak out before a metal blade pierced his heart. The rasetsu's eyes rolled in agony while letting out a frightening scream. Just seconds after that, Saito took his katana off of the poor man's body and sheathed it back into its scabbard.

"I hope you don't mind losing one of your rasetsu, Yukimura-dono," said Saito quietly while wiping off the fresh crimson blood from his stoic face. "As always, I will tell the others about the progress of Ochimizu project. Please excuse me."

As Saito prepared to walk out of the room, he took a quick glance at the sparkling small bottle on the table. The crimson liquid inside resembled blood so much, and the dim candlelight added the horror impression. Nobody would think that such amount of water had frightening effect.

Upon looking at Saito who stared at the Ochimizu seriously, Kodo questioned in joking tone, "What is it, Saito? Do you want to drink it too? It can multiply your power although of course there's a great risk behind it...As far as I'm concerned, it will shorten your lifespan if you useâ€"

"If..." Saito cut the doctor's long speech. "If Shinsengumi orders me to take in this potion, I'm going to do it. I wouldn't have any complaint..."

There was no doubt in his words upon saying such scary determination. Even Kodo couldn't say anything else as he saw Saito's back that somehow seemed lonely. But nevertheless, he didn't see that Saito's sharp gaze softened as he murmured soundlessly more to himself, continuing his previous words.

"...or if I need it to protect someone. The one that I'm supposed to protect in the first place."

\* \* \*

><p>Going back to the main mansion, Saito felt a bit relieved by leaving that place. Nobody knewâ€"or maybe some older ones like Inoue or Kondou could guess that there was a great suffering beneath his expressionless mask. People might call him heartless or whatever they wanted, but they wouldn't care that he had taken all the burdens on his shoulder, acting like a criminal by doing most of dirty jobs for the sake of Shinsengumi's glory.<p>

But he was glad that he could be useful for Shinsengumi, the only place worth to be called his home. While thinking about this, a tiny smile was formed on his lips. Yes, it was true. He just needed to live like this. It was enough. It made him proud of being the Shinsengumi captain and he couldn't ask for more. Other people didn't need to understand him. Just live by missions andâ€"

"Hajime-san! Hajime-san!"

Oh gosh, her again. Sighing in slight annoyance, Saito placed his gaze on Chizuru who was running to him in cheerful steps. What else this time?

"Kondou-san asked me to buy some vegetables. Would you please accompany me? He told me to ask you out as well." The girl moved her head a bit while a happy smile lined her lips.

Saito wasn't sure whether Kondou did this on purpose, but if it was the Commander's order, he had nothing to objectâ€"even though it was just an unimportant stuff like going shopping in the market.

Saito exhaled nonchalantly then said, "Alright. I will change my clothes firstâ€"and don't make such face." He added as he saw Chizuru seem scared upon noticing the Satcho man's bloodstain on his white scarf. "You must get used to this...Just wait here, okay?"

Chizuru nodded. It was right, she must get used of being a Shinsengumi captain's wife. And she must really do that if she wanted to understand her partner life in a better way.

Walking to the main gate, Chizuru enjoyed the spring breeze while silently recalling their first good moments. The pink blush graced her cheeks when she unconsciously imagined her and Saito being a normal family, with adorable children running around happily...\_No way\_, the girl told herself. It was still a long journey in her case...or wasn't it?

"I've found you."

While daydreaming, you wouldn't want anyone else to ruin your imagination, right? Hence Chizuru glared in reflect at the whoever dared to disturb her. But as soon as it appeared, her glare dropped as the stranger in front of her returned her gaze by a pair of piercing ruby eyes.

"Who are you...?" Chizuru asked weakly. She never saw this man before, and judging by a sly smirk on his face, he was definitely not a good guy. Wait...other than that, Chizuru was sure he was not a member of Shinsengumi. Then how did he manage to enter this manor?

However, the mysterious man answered her question with a forceful grasp on her wrist. Chizuru squeezed her eyes shut in pain and almost shouted when suddenly the stranger's face went closer to hers until their noses were touching.

"Finally..." His blonde hair mingled with Chizuru's brown locks. "I'm going to take what's mine back."

Gathering her courage, Chizuru screamed, "No! Let go of me!" But the man's grip was too strong, she couldn't release herself. To make it worse, it looked like there was nobody could hear her since most of warriors were going on morning patrol, while the some left were training on the other side of the mansion.

"Come with me," the blonde man pulled Chizuru's hand harshly, paying no mind to the clueless maiden who had started crying. Just why the nightmare began to show itself again?

"No..." Chizuru had no power to cry out nor unsheathe her short sword as her heart was dominated by fear. "Help me...Hajime-san..."

"Could you please release her? You're hurting an innocent young woman."

Upon hearing that familiar voice, Chizuru turned around in relief and placed her teary irises on the person whose name she called before. For unknown reason, his name was the only thing crossed her mind in this intimidating moment.

Saito positioned his deadly left hand on the hilt of his sword, with his sapphire eyes never left that stranger and Chizuru. "I give you ten seconds. Tell me who you are and the reason you came here...Are you a spy from Satcho?"

Unexpectedly, the mysterious guy laughed loudly as though Saito had said something funny, "A spy? Such low profession wouldn't suit me! I'm just here to take this woman!"

"You can't." Saito closed his eyes in solemnity and took a battle

stance. Chizuru knew it was the stance for his powerful iai strike, which never failed to slice the enemy. "If you want to take her away, you must defeat me first!"

With those words, Saito moved his katana in swift movement while in the same time, his other hand pulled Chizuru's body into his chest. The blonde man seemed surprised due to this rapid attack that he let Chizuru go just that way...Here it was, he would end up the same like a lot of people who dared to try Saito Hajime's patience...

\_Clash!\_

Saito's blue eyes opened wide as he found out that his infamous strike had been blocked by the stranger's katana—a well-crafted one, with crimson hilt and so was its scabbard. Tightening his right arm around Chizuru's figure protectively, Saito leapt forward and prepared to give the second attack to the now smirking guy...

...But that man was nowhere to be found. All of a sudden, Saito's samurai instinct felt a motion of blade from behind, and the captain managed to block his enemy's sword before it hit him. Again, their swords clashed.

"Who are you to her, trash? Are you his personal guardian or what?" The stranger pressed his blade against Saito's, and it seemed he was at advantage since he used two arms, while Saito just used one because the other arm was still circling around Chizuru's body.

But nevertheless, Saito refused to give up. Gritting his teeth while maintaining his sword's position, he answered, "She's my wife...and it's my duty to protect her!"

Upon listening to this, the mysterious man's strength somehow got weaker. Saito didn't waste this opportunity and used all his power to throw his enemy back. In roughly the same time, the Shinsengumi executives who stayed in the headquarters finally came to give him a hand after hearing that ruckus.

Still, the blonde man didn't give a crap about the late newcomers. He sent a death glare to Saito, "You married her?! Do you know how precious she is?!"

Saito returned his glare, and gently stroked Chizuru's wavering back, "Yes, we've been married. Do you have any problem with that?" Abruptly, a flash of recognition crossed Saito's mind. He was silent for some seconds until he voiced out a low whisper, "You...have we met somewhere before?"

"How am I supposed to remember every shit I saw on the street?!" The mysterious guy shouted in pure hatred and turned his blazing eyes to Chizuru afterwards. Suddenly his eyes narrowed, as if he scanned through the girl's body. After some moments that seemed like forever, that malevolent smirk found its way back to his face.

"...Ah, I see...Okay, I think I will join your little marriage game for a while."

"What do you mean?!" Saito growled. "Besides, you haven't answered my question yet."

With a '\_tch\_', the man raised his eyebrows in arrogance, "You know what I mean. Don't think you can deceive me with such silly lie..." Then he stared at Saito for a long time before his scarlet eyes opened wide in disbelief.

"You...could it be that you're the one whoâ€"

"I know it's you!" Saito threw Chizuru to Hijikataâ€"now he could fight with full power, ran towards the man and swung his blade, cutting some of the blonde strands. "You're NOT human!"

But the stranger vanished and re-appeared in the place outside Saito's sword range. As ruby met sapphire, both were burning with killing intent, the stranger whispered with a tiny malicious smile lined his lips, "Now I remember you, trash. Be proud..."

The other Shinsengumi members didn't understand about what was happening right now as they witnessed Saito and the blonde guy talked in such familiar manner. Trying to get her courage back, Chizuru asked shakily, "Hajime-san...do you know him?"

However, Saito didn't give any answer. He ran towards the mysterious man once again, yet before he could touch even a strand of his hair, the crimson-eyed guy had jumped and landed on the headquarter's roofâ€"which was impossible for any human to do.

He stared down at Saito, then Chizuru, completely ignoring the others. Although he had failed at his missionâ€"kidnapping someone else's wife, Chizuru swore she saw a glimpse of satisfaction, but not in a good way, gracing his face.

"Don't you dare run away!" Saito shouted and took a fighting stance. "Come down and face me here!"

This situation was confusing. Even Kondou and Hijikata didn't know what to do while looking at their subordinate which seemed like losing his usual calmness. But they knew Saito didn't intend to explain anything right now as the young captain kept glaring at the invader.

All of a sudden, the weird man sheathed his red katana back to the scabbard as though he had lost interest. In her still dizzy mind, Chizuru barely heard Saito shouting something else, about his enemy had underestimated him. She wasn't sure, but the next thing she knew was, she had run forward and wrapped her small arms around Saito's waist.

"Hajime-san, don't! Just let him go!" Using the little strength left, Chizuru managed to hold Saito in place. Within her heart, something told her that Saito...couldn't win against that stranger.

Saito gasped, and slowly he realized that he had acted strange upon meeting this invader. It was definitely not good, because he didn't want anyone else to know about \_it\_...especially...\_her.\_

Looking down nonchalantly at the couple, the blonde male sighed a bit. Obviously he didn't like watching the drama scene before him. Yet he decided to have fun a bit as he said, "It's quite unexpected reunion with you...But don't worry, if you want to fight me so much,

we will meet again..."

While saying those words, he jumped down from the roof and somewhat seemed like flying, slowly disappeared from the sight. Chizuru could just freeze in place, confused of what he meant with 'reunion.' And also, she knew it was only the beginning of something bad.

"...soon."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Pheww it was a pretty long chapter I made, but I hope it could pay off my late update...Kyaaa don't hate me D: <strong>

\*\*Now I wish...just wish...to post the next chapter faster...I don't like making you guys wait for too long and I hate abandoning my own story T\_T But for now, just wish me luck for the upcoming midterms \*pray and study hard\*\*

\*\*To make my day, how about leaving a REVIEW? XD\*\*

## 7. ANNOUNCEMENT (not about Hiatus)

\*\*WARNING!\*\*

\*\*THIS IS\_ NOT\_ AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIATUS. I ONLY WANTED TO EXPLAIN WHY I DISAPPEARED JUST LIKE SOME GENIE IN THE BOTTLE...(Okay, I just can't be serious in the matter of Author's Notes)\*\*

\*\*So, in short...I AM VERY EXTREMELY SORRY.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>I have abandoned this story for...how many months? A half year? Even this irresponsible writer knew that her readers already fed up with waiting, waiting, and just waiting for the next chapter...and for another disappointment, this "new chapter" is NOT an update to this story.<strong>

\*\*It's all my fault, feel free to hate me or leave this story, since I've left you guys for so long as well. But if you still love me as a writer and want to read more of my stories, I would really, really appreciate it :)\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Where should I start? As some of you guys might know, I was working by day and taking classes at night to take my Master's Degree starting this early year. Let me reveal a little piece of me more. I have already gained a Bachelor of Graphic Design last year (Oh no, now you know I've graduated university and am older than most of you!). <strong>

\*\*I don't mean to be arrogant, but I have an IQ level that can be classified as "Almost Genius" in IQ test scale since I was a little girl. Therefore my family..no...my entire big family put their high hopes on me. You know how it feels, right? It's A GREAT BURDEN. They always said "Oh, someday you'll be as rich as Donald Trump!" or "You



have a pretty face, smart brain, and polite attitude. What a perfect girl!" or "You came from a honorable family, I'm sure you'll find a perfect groom someday!"\*\*

\*\*Seriously, I sound like a drama queen here, but that's the truth. My ethnicity is Chinese (though I live in another country) and my family is a stereotypical Chinese family you know, with my grandparents become the leader of the pack. They are very strict with old tradition, culture, and as you could guess before I say it, they love MONEY very much and with my blessed brain, they hope to get more money to fill their already-more-than-enough treasure boxes! I was forced to learn how to become a proper Chinese lady. From tea art (For the sake of hell, I love Japanese green tea better and who cares about the way you pour your tea to a mere cup?), wearing red attire as often as possible as a symbol of luck and prosperity (I honor your point of view, Grandma, but may I wear orange instead?), strict curfew (Hey sorry friends, it's already \_8pm\_ so I must go home!) and so on...too long to list. Oh I hate all of those!\*\*

\*\*However, I never cried...\*\*

\*\*...because I found this sanctuary called "anime" and anything related to it in elementary school. It made me laugh and smile for real (If you ever read my story "Petals of Time," Chizuru's personality there is similar to me. What a shame ~.~). I'm already early-twenty-something year old (yeah I'm an old granny nooo D:) and I still love anime, manga, and video games XD I don't have so many friends due to the strict curfew so doing all anime-related things (including writing fanfiction of course! hohoho I always got the best mark in English class you know! \*slapped\*) is my sweet escape from the reality I hate. Even my friends are afraid of my mom because she used to give them a killer look whenever I came home late by ten minutes. \*\*

\*\*And you know what? To make it worse, when it came to choosing university major, my mom chose it for me! She said graphic design was suitable for me blah blah blah (Mom, I actually want to learn more about Japanese literature!)...and so I did it...and graduated with \_magna cum laude...\_and Her Majesty Grandmother forced me to work in family company...in finance department! (So what's the purpose of taking graphic design major in the first place?) and take night classes of finance management to achieve more prestigious title.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>...AND HERE, THE MAIN STORY BEGINS...<strong>

\*\*One day, I collapsed in the office and was hurried to the hospital. I thought I was just too tired since the doctor didn't find something bad in my blood check-up result. However, he referred me to a neurologist... and his suspicion was right, I was diagnosed with severe Spasmophilia (an abnormality in nerves that makes me feel tired easily) and Fibromyalgia (chronic fatigue syndrome). What a combo, eh?\*\*

\*\*Rawrr that time I hated my family even more because Spasmophilia is a genetic illness! And the cause of it is tiredness and too much stress! (Trust me, even Einstein would've been stressed out if he worked like crazy by day and was a student at night). So for the first time ever, my family understood me and they let me leave

university ("Bachelor degree is fine" they said...were my ears deceiving me?). \*\*

\*\*I've filled most of this year (even on June 17th, my birthday!) with nerves therapy and taking lots of medicines. Slowly but sure, I feel better than before. The doctor said that as long as I'm not too tired, I'll be fine. My relation with my family has been getting better too (Hell, should I fall sick first before they realized that I'm not a genius?).\*\*

\*\*Yeah, that was the reason why I disappeared before. It was the worst chapter in my life!\*\*

\*\*...Actually I was ready to make a comeback on September but when I wanted to open this website...I DIDN'T HAVE A COURAGE TO FACE YOU GUYS, because I knew you were already disappointed with me, who used to update her stories regularly. I decided to retire from fanfiction, and didn't care about the e-mail notifications saying there was a new review, pleading me to update soon. I even ignored the private messages. Could you believe that? I just wanted to leave fanfiction completely. I didn't care about it anymore.\*\*

\*\*BUT I longed to write. I remembered the moment I started my first story, "The Frozen Sword," September last year. I giggled like an idiot when I got my very first review. So I encouraged myself to be "lunar9queen" again...and failed. Coward. Once more, I heartlessly ignored all the PMs and reviews that kept coming, asking when the next chapter will be up.\*\*

\*\*I busied myself with my work and starting last month, I have a green beauty blog since natural beauty is also my passion. I use different alias there. I wanted to throw away the name "lunar9queen" forever and forget all the things related to it. I thought I could write there happily to replace fanfiction in my heart. However, writing beauty reviews are different from crystalizing your imagination into stories. Something was missing...And today, finally I succeeded to write and post this announcement, simply to explain everything from the beginning. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>HATE ME or LOVE ME, you choose. <strong>

\*\*Will you accept this heartless coward as "lunar9queen" once again? Will you read the stories I write in the future? Will you review the chapters of my story?\*\*

\*\*It's all up to you guys. I don't have a right to say anything now in my position. However, I still want to thank you for those who have reviewed the last chapter and sent me PMs. Again, please forgive me for doing all of these terrible things, especially to my loyal readers and dear friends I found here, Kit2000 and Marialena.\*\*

\*\*Unworthy as I am of your forgiveness, I'm still begging for it. Please, answer my questions by reviewing this post. You can also do it in PM if you're shy or thinking that I'm unfit of your precious review. \*\*

\*\*I don't write this to get your sympathy, it's all true. My health

is not the one to blame. Myself is.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>If you want me to go, I will go.<strong>

\*\*If you still want me to write, I will write.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>.<strong>

\*\*.\*\*

\*\*.\*\*

\*\*Eh, don't cry! It's just my style of writing that is angsty! Yeah yeah I know I seem more serious than usual, ne? I'm looking forward to your answers guys! If you really want me to go, please don't use too harsh words ^^" I just can't stand it. If you notice it, I got my first bad review ever for the last chapter and I almost cried! D:  
\*\*

\*\*Blah, after all, I'm still the same cheerful lunar9queen who loves to write angsty stories!\*\*

\*\* Anyway, I'll be waiting until the middle of December to your answers. If the majority wants me to continue this story, I'll do it before Christmas to repent my sin. \*\*\*\*Once I come back, beware all of you Saito x Chizuru writers! I'm getting my throne back. In the game of thrones, you either win, or die ;)\*\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>With sincerest apology,<strong>

\*\*lunar9queen\*\*

## 8. That Night and Tonight

\*\*Hello! Feel free to throw rotten eggs at meeee! \*troll\*\*\*

\*\*Okay, so it's already 1.5 years since the last time I updated my story. I'M TERRIBLY SORRY! \*\*

\*\*I know I just do this for fun and my readers are patient (By the way, are you guys still with me? If not, then I can't blame you... I really can't since it's my fault), but I'm not lying when I said I love all of my stories so I never wanted to take a long (not supposedly) hiatus... But you know, life happens and blah blah blah... okay, I won't write a long Author's Note once in a while hehe :3 But let me say THANK YOU to those who have reviewed, favorited, and followed this story. Thank you also for the encouragements sent via PMs ^\_^ If not for you guys, lunar9queen might have been dead already T\_T\*\*

\*\*Okay...so as you know, I haven't been writing for a while so there might be some mistakes here and there (although I have triple-checked it) but I hope they're all unnoticeable ones hehe.\*\*

**\*\*For now, just enjoy my comeback chapter! XD \*\***

**\* \* \***

**><p><strong>BLURRED KALEIDOSCOPE<strong>**

**CHAPTER 7: THAT NIGHT AND TONIGHT**

**\* \* \***

**><p>He was egocentric. He was thinking very highly of himself. He was strong, and feared even by his comrades.<p>**

For he was Kazama Chikage, the lord of oni. One of the last pureblood demons existed.

But nowadays, it was a mere title. Oni was a rare existence. Those who survived had their blood mingled with humans' already and chose to stay away from the war business, and this was the reason Kazama's mood often went bad. He felt betrayed by his own kin sometimes.

However, today was different.

As he made his way to Satcho headquarters while staring at the trembling soldiers for a moment, a grin of satisfaction graced his cruel, but ironically handsome face.

"W-welcome back, Kazama-sama," one of the Satcho soldiers greeted him, only to be ignored.

Upon seeing Amagiri and Shiranui, who was waiting for him. He ordered, "Let's leave this place at once. It reeks of worthless humans."

Shiranui grinned and tilted his head to the side, "By 'leave,' did you mean we've finally been free from supporting these humans in war? Or would it only be temporary? Because like you, I've grown tired hanging out withâ€" "

"Shiranui," suddenly Amagiri cut his friend's monologue. "Don't be a fool. Satcho has been a great help by offering shelters to our ancestors when they were being chased by other humans... I'm sure that Kazama just needs some fresh air."

However, there was red fire blazing in Kazama's ruby eyes as he couldn't hide his excitement, "No, Amagiri. We are going to leave this place for good. We have done enough efforts to help Satcho, and I never planned to do more than what we owed them in the past. On top of that, I have found my bride, Yukimura Chizuru... But unfortunately, she has been married to another man from Shinsengumi."

Amagiri's and Shiranui's eyes widened in disbelief. Whomever dared to take Kazama's precious bride, the last pureblood female oni, must be crazy enough. It was alright if he didn't know anything about the whole oni-business, and Kazama would kill him quick without any further torture... Yet this was... Someone from Shinsengumi? Clearly that traitor named Yukimura Kodo had planned it all along with Lord

of Aizu so no powerful demon heir could be born.

"He is a captain as well... The one infamous with his deadly left-handed sword technique," Kazama continued, a malevolent smirk played on his lips.

A captain of Shinsengumi! Now that was worse than ever.

But...

"Kazama, why don't you seem concerned?" Amagiri asked in confusion. For him and Shiranui, this was clearly a serious matter.

This time, Kazama couldn't hold back his maniacal laughs, "Hahaha! You know what?! That girl is still pure and untouched! We are lucky the one who married her is the coldest captain of Shinsengumi. I doubt he has any interest in Yukimura Chizuru at all! I've seen this man once that night...He looked like some emotionless killing machine. The rumor is true, after all..."

"There's only one left-handed samurai in the entire realm...", murmured Shiranui. "If I recall correctly, his name is..."

"Saito Hajime...", Kazama seemed satisfied instead of worried. "He should be proud because I will remember his name from now on as a shit who steals my wife...and because of that, he will never have a peaceful death!"

\* \* \*

><p>After leaving Satsuma-Choshu alliance forever without even telling the leaders, Kazama, Amagiri, and Shiranui went into the deep woods where Yukimura's house used to stand. Yet there was nothing here now, not even a trace of burning.<p>

"Kazama, why did you bring us here?" Shiranui couldn't understand why his lord was interested in a deserted place like this.

Kazama smirked, "Hmph, because I saw this so-called husband here that night, and he did something awful... Very awful that I'm sure he must keep it secret from Yukimura Chizuru or else it will ruin their little marriage game."

Ignoring his two subordinates who were still completely clueless. All of a sudden Kazama spoke, "You may show yourself now. There is no use hiding yourself from the lord of oni... Besides, our main purpose to go here in the first place was to find you. It was quite a gambling. I didn't know you're really here..."

Slowly, Kazama turned his body around and faced an amber-eyed young man. Amagiri and Shiranui had readied their fighting stance upon seeing this newcomer. But a slight motion from Kazama's hand told them it was going to be alright.

"I'm here to demand an explanation from you, because you were also here that night, right? Don't worry, what I'm offering now is an alliance to destroy Saito Hajime, one of the Shinsengumi's captain. I couldn't care less about the others. If you agree, then state your name and swear your loyalty to me... If you disagree... Well, you can

always be a wandering demon forever, can't you?"

The new demon didn't need to think twice. Quickly, he knelt down before Kazama and took out his katana as a symbol of loyalty. A longer sword that had identical design with Chizuru's short sword. The symbol of Yukimura family.

"I, Nagumo Kaoru, swears to be always by Kazama Chikage, lord of oni's side as his loyal subordinate. My life is yours, my heart is yours, my sword is yours."

\* \* \*

><p>Meanwhile in the meeting room of Shinsengumi mansion, Saito had regained his usual calmness and was explaining to the rest of Shinsengumi captains that the red-eyed invader was not human.<p>

"He is a dangerous demon," said Saito. "Even you guys could tell by his abnormal and powerful movements, right? On top of that, he is trying to kidnap Chizuru."

The executives nodded. Saito didn't usually talk much so when he did, it meant they were in a serious matter.

"If I'm correct, he did say something about reunion with you," Hijikata narrowed his amethyst eyes.

His most loyal subordinate only gave a small nod as a retort.

"Just where exactly did you meet him, Saito?" asked Kondou confusedly. If Saito ever met someone suspicious who was that powerful, he would surely warn the rest of Shinsengumi members before. But he didn't.

After some seconds, Saito stated, "I'm afraid it's a bit personal, Commander." Then he continued, "But I believe we could know more about this demon by asking Yukimura-dono, who was with Satcho before."

The captains nodded in agreement, and Saito offered to summon Kodo by himself. As he slid the door open, he found his wife, who looked kind of sad. It didn't take a genius to read between the lines. The maiden had grown tired of being protected. She wanted to prove herself. She was no weakling anymore, having been through a lot and being an elite force's captain's wife. Still, Shinsengumi didn't understand or rather...they kept seeing her as a fragile thing.

"Don't worry, I will protect you," said Saito upon meeting Chizuru's amber eyes. "Because your safety is Shinsengumi's top priority..."

\* \* \*

><p><em>See?<em>

\* \* \*

><p>"...And mine."<p>

Chizuru was sure her ears had deceived her before a gentle pat landed on her head and a rare, small smile was given to her by the leader of

Shinsengumi's third division.

"Besides, I know that you're already strong enough."

\* \* \*

><p>By Kodo's information, it was known that the intruder from before was a demon indeed, namely Kazama Chikage. He was also the main reason why Saito had to marry Chizuru to begin with. Unsurprisingly, Kodo and Shinsengumi didn't feel too frightened about this because after all, Chizuru was a married woman now. Her husband was a human and it was already too late for Kazama to kidnap her. Chizuru had lost her ability to give birth to a powerful oni...<p>

...At least that theory only existed on their minds.

It was kind of difficult for Saito. He just couldn't touch that girl in bed. He was not good at something like that and now his comrades had mistaken him as someone who did it wonderfully that Kazama gave up and went away just like that. Seriously... Was it even funny?

Even when the last petal of cherry blossoms fell to the ground and spring transformed into summer, this bedroom secret remained unrevealed. Still, Saito kept protecting Chizuru with his soul. Who knew when this demon lord would try to abduct his wife again?

However, Kazama didn't show himself again even once. This fact sort of ensured Shinsengumi, except Saito, that he would never show up anymore and they could focus on their fight with Satcho, who had lost the supports from the demon clan.

And although Saito didn't say nor protest about anything, signs of exhaustion were clearly seen on his stoic face. As he had to fight yet protect his wife alone at the same time, he often came home late and didn't eat. It was so like him, willing to shoulder all of the burdens for the sake of Shinsengumi's glory.

And of course, aside of missing him, now Chizuru was worried about Saito's health as well.

\* \* \*

><p>On one fine summer night, Saito finally had time to relax his strained muscles. He was standing in front of his room, leaned a bit onto the wooden pillar while enjoying the lone moment with the enchanting full moon above. His loose, beautiful purple hair and pure-white sleeping yukata made him look less intimidating and softer than usual.<p>

"May I join you?"

Saito tilted his head to the side and nodded slightly to his wife. Upon seeing that gesture, Chizuru's feet led her to the place where Saito was, so they were standing side-by-side now.

"You look tired, Hajime-san," said Chizuru, trying to get rid of the awkward silence.

Saito threw a glance at her, "Do I?"

"Yes," answered the maiden, "You seem to lose some weight as well. I'm worried..."

The young warrior only sighed, "Is that a habit of yours? Worrying about every small detail?"

"You need some rest. That's all."

"I don't."

This stubborn man was really something. Just a few months ago he acknowledged her as a strong woman, though Chizuru wasn't sure whether Saito remembered such unimportant stuff like that, or if he did that out of sympathy.

"...At least..., listen to your wife when she's talking," Chizuru glared at her obstinate spouse.

Saito narrowed his eyes into blue slits, "Please remember that the life we have right now is not only ours."

Chizuru gulped, but she managed to maintain her courage. It was true that Saito didn't see her as his wife, but she still was, and she would do the best to understand him in this fated arranged marriage.

"Then..., why are you letting me do this?" Gently, her fingers lingered on Saito's chiseled features, which were illuminated by the moonlight.

Seemed like thinking and wondering for a while, Saito's lips parted open to answer that question though he did nothing to stop the girl's action, but Chizuru had silenced him.

"Please don't say something like 'it's completely ordinary for a wife' or something duty-related. It's hurting me..."

Surprised by her own stupid honesty, Chizuru pulled her hands away from Saito's face. There was also a glimpse of shock in her husband's deep cerulean eyes. Now she felt like the worst wife ever. How could she wish for a selfish, special moment with this gallant warrior, who was in the middle of a serious mission to protect her? It was a great mistake to wish that someone like Saito could understand a woman's feelings.

Moreover, how could she suddenly felt like a weakling all over again?

"Chizuru..."

\* \* \*

><p><em>Here it goes! He will lecture me for not understanding the situation we're in!<em>

\* \* \*

><p>"...What are you trying to say? You seem scared, but your eyes



just now were genuine. So..."<p>

\* \* \*

><p><em>Huh? What?<em>

\* \* \*

><p>"Eyes are one's mirrors of soul, Chizuru. I can tell that you're an honest girl." A ghost of serene smile lined Saito's lips, as if his burdens so far were lifted from his shoulders. "You may say everything you have in mind right now... Aren't I your husband?"<p>

The last sentence was so true it moved her soul. And this time, no word 'duty' was mentioned. Feelings overwhelmed Chizuru's heart that she didn't realize some layers of tears had begun to coat her brown irises. She knew she had to be strong for everyone's sake and this was embarrassing. Yet still...

...The emotions in her heart were real, and so was that gentle thumb that wiping her tears away right now.

"Hajime-san, you've changed..."

Upon hearing his wife's response, Saito chuckled lightly, "Is that true? Strange, I used to believe in things that don't change... But I guess you're right. Changes are needed sometimes, especially when it comes toâ€"

"Firstly!" Chizuru shouted, knowing what word Saito was going to say next\_â€\_and she didn't want to hear it\_â€" "Don't overwork yourself! Eat your meal properly! You can't live your life for other people forever! And please..."

Those words were followed by a choking noise that failed to be restrained from coming out along. Some minutes were needed for Chizuru to reclaim her ability to speak.

"...don't make me miss you everyday..."

The time had frozen as the young couple locked their gaze onto each other. It was strange. When they first met, Chizuru didn't even dare to look at Saito in the eyes but now... Although those same eyes still looked lonely and the owner himself never said anything about his feelings, she could say that tenderness had dominated those twinkling blue diamonds tonight.

Yes, tonight...

If only for tonight...

Fixing her gaze onto Saito, Chizuru came closer and probably between conscious and unconscious state, rested her right palm on Saito's toned chest. She could feel his steady heartbeat, and every line of his muscles under his thin sleeping yukata. Little by little, the Earth seemed to be disappeared, leaving the two youths alone in their own tiny world.

"...You asked me to speak out my mind, so I did."

Even though it was a summer night, unusual cold yet comforting wind blew as Saito spoke in a low voice, which was almost inaudible, "Is that all?"

"No," Chizuru replied almost immediately, now her left hand had found its way to Saito's waist, drawing him even closer to her. "Actually, I..."

Saito said nothing and planned to wait patiently until the girl had finished all she needed to say. After all, he had given her a rough time and this was at least he could do. Letting the girl feel like a normal wife once in a while was not a bad idea. However seriously, was it only out of obligation? If so, how could he explain his own arms, that slowly circling that said girl's body protectively as though he didn't want to lose her?

The night was quiet. The moon and the stars were watching the couple from above, awaiting what would come next. They were so close now, much closer than ever. Their noses were touching... Their eyes were glancing at each other lovingly... And their lips...were only one inch away.

"Hajime-san...", Chizuru breathed out in Saito's embrace, her right fingertips played with his silky, beautiful violet hair which falling forward onto her face. "I..."

"If...", suddenly Saito whispered at the young woman's earlobe, without releasing her from his strong arms. "If I want to pretend that I don't know what you are going to say next, would you be angry at me?"

Nothingness prevailed, only to be followed by a weak voice from Chizuru's throat, "...Why?"

"Because I'm not worthy of such feelings."

"...Why? Aren't you my husband? Aren't you the one who asked me to speak out my mind?"

Saito made a hesitant move to break the embrace, but Chizuru held him even tighter. They were so close, yet so far away.

"Do not run away."

"I don't."

"Then say the truth. I know you just need somebody to understand you..., and I'll be willing to be the one who hold you close and give you happiness."

Again, silence descended upon them. However, what she just said was as true as ever, of this she was sure. No matter what kind of response Saito would give her... She wouldn't care.

"...Because you're my wife?" asked the azure-eyed male with his deep, calm voice.

As she brushed her knuckles on Saito's perfect cheekbone, Chizuru answered, "Look at me, Hajime-san..., you already know it's not the

only reason...We're going to live happily ever after, forever, just like a common married couple once it's all settled."

"...Are you sure?"

"Yes, of course. If only for tonight we couldâ€œ"

However, those words remained unfinished, because a strong arm had gripped around her waist, and another hand was pushing her back so she was thrown into a lean, muscular chest. The owner of the arms embraced her even more tightly now and gave her a seal on the lips, namely a kiss... It was very soft, tender, and not hurried..., as if it came from a prince and not a fearsome samurai. As Chizuru felt Saito's velvety lips against hers, she knew that she had been in love with this man long before she realized it... Maybe... Since the first time she missed him while he was away on missions.

Meanwhile Saito was lost in train of thoughts. He couldn't explain why he was doing this. What was this bizarre emotion that enveloped his soul and stirred in his usual cold heart? Something... that was there but wasn't there yet? Was it duty? No... It was obviously something else that he wanted to pretend not to know.

When finally the kiss ended, the blushing maiden gave the young Shinsengumi captain a questioning glance. Could it be... her feelings had reached him?

Saito closed his eyes in solemnity, feeling the sweet touch of Chizuru's lips that was still there. As he opened his eyes again, he stated firmly, though there was a ghost of sad tone in his voice, "Unfortunately, 'forever' doesn't exist for us, Chizuru..."

Furrowing her eyebrows in confusion, Chizuru could say nothing more. After a moment that seemed like eternity, Saito broke the embrace and made a small gesture to the bedroom, clearly he wanted to end this rare wonderful evening already and go to sleep. But now it had come to this...

Abruptly, he felt a pair of delicate hands wrapping on his figure from behind. That girl wanted more, of this he was sure. She only wished to treasure every second of these moments, expressing her feelings that weren't worthy for someone sinful like him.

Oh, did he just think of himself as a sinful man? True, his swords had bathed in a great river of blood. But in this case, he had stolen a certain innocent girl's happiness by...

"...Murderer..."

Whomever let out that voice all of a sudden in the middle of the silent night, must be good at reading minds.

Why did the time and fate have to be so cruel?

\* \* \*

><p><strong>So, what do you think? Do I still have my magic or has it grown softer like Saito in this story? O\_O Either way, please leave a REVIEW so I can improve and hopefully don't need another year to post

the next chapter! D8<strong>

**\*\*Thank you for reading~\*\***

## 9. Murderer

**\*\*Hello guys! I'm back~~\*\***

**\*\*Wow first of all, thank you for all the reviews! I didn't expect the last chapter could get 10 reviews! You know, I hadn't written in so long and Hakuouki is a small fandom so yeah, it's like my old golden days! \*the hell, why am I feeling old all of a sudden?\*\*\***

**\*\*Anyway, time to express my gratitude!\*\***

**\*\*scarletrose, hello! yeah I'm back ^\_^ Hopefully for good this time, thanks for the compliment!\*\***

**\*\*Guest (1), I'm sorry for making you wait in so long! Hope you enjoy this new chapter! xD\*\***

**\*\*KitsuneSenpail8, read this chapter and you will know whether Chizuru already knows the truth or not hehe! \*evil's laugh\*\*\***

**\*\*misao97, thank you for still being here! I might have taken a short (okay, not that short actually) break but I would never abandon my own stories :3 Though as you said, it's kinda depressing when the authors of good stories never came back :(\*\***

**\*\*SoulEmpress, feel free to punch me with Saito plushie! xD Thank you for the review, glad you liked my previous chapter! Enjoy this one too ;D\*\***

**\*\*Kit2000, yeah for the kiss! After a long hiatus, a kiss was the least I could do for this young couple haha! And wow, I can't really imagine Saito in Deep Purple! O\_O\*\***

**\*\*Guest (2), long time no see! Thanks for the review ^\_\*\*\***

**\*\*AzureArchxngel, awww I missed you too! xD and you're right, it's better late than never. I hope I can update in a steady pace from now on :3 \*crossing fingers\*\*\***

**\*\*Reaper, where have you been?! oh and about Saito OVA, I've watched it 12483xx times just to see his cute blushing face! Have you watched the Hakuouki movies (part 1 and 2) by the way? Saito turned into a rasetsu in the end and used both hands to wield swords! Oh yeah for sexy dual blades!\*\***

**\*\*Guest (3)/ Monica, hi there! thank you for liking this story! ^\_^ Hmm I can't tell you what's going to happen next yet but plot twist does sound yummy :3 \*mini spoiler\*\*\***

**\*\*.\*\***

**\*\*.\*\***

\*\*Okay, before I'm tempted to continue my rambling, let's read this chapter together! Popcorn, anyone? XD\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>BLURRED KALEIDOSCOPE<strong>

CHAPTER 8: MURDERER

\* \* \*

><p>"...Murderer..."<p>

Only one word, spoken in a whisper.

Yet it was enough to forcefully snap Saito and Chizuru back to reality and trigger the reflex from the samurai. He moved forward so Chizuru was protected behind his back, and that was when he realized that his swords were in his room. Worse, there wasn't enough time to take them before the intruders did something bad.

However, there was no fear in himself upon facing such unclear situation, and slowly, three shadows revealed themselves from the darkness of the night.

"Kazama Chikage...", Saito growled as he saw the blonde demon leading the rest of the group.

"Oh," Kazama smirked. "I see there's no need for introduction. Looks like that traitor, Yukimura Kodo, has told you everything about us."

Saito's eyes blazing with blue fire, scanning the either side of the demon lord. There were a large man with red hair on the right and another man with a gun on the left.

Amagiri Kyuuju and Shiranui Kyo, Saito thought. Now with three intimidating demons right in front of him, could he really protect the trembling girl behind him? His clever brain started making a quick strategyâ€” He would call for the other captains' help now and while they were busy fighting, he would use the opportunity to take his swords and then join the fight himself to drive the invaders away. Chizuru's safety was their top priority and there was no way he would let Kazama kidnap her.

The plan might have been worked...

...just if the fourth shadow didn't appear from the rustling bushes and froze Saito's tongue.

As the once sweet moonlight now shone upon it, Saito's and Chizuru's eyes widened in shock while the demons' lips curved in winning, menacing smiles. Here he was...the fourth demon who was not related to Aizu nor Satcho, he who was called a wandering oni before he swore his loyalty to Kazama.

And he, whose existence was erased from Yukimura family's history despite being born together with Chizuru...

A smile forming on his lips, Chizuru's smile.

"Good evening...", he greeted the frozen couple, but mainly it was directed to Saito. His brown eyes focused at his azure irises, "...Saito Hajime, or would I rather call you 'murderer'?"

Strange, the smile didn't leave his face as he said those words. His expression remained calm, too. The opposite happened to Saito, whose face grew slightly pale even though he tried not to show it.

"...Who...are you?"

Chizuru's question broke the silence. Still clinging to Saito's yukata, she knew something was not right here. A young man her age with her face and Saito's weird reaction upon being called 'murderer' despite the fact that he had slain countless lives... Was this case something very specific then?

"Sorry for the late introduction." The stranger's smile grew wider and he bowed politely, "My name is Nagumo Kaoru, or should I say..." His eyes narrowed, "Yukimura Kaoru was my birth name. I'm your twin brother, Chizuru."

Confused. That was the emotion Chizuru felt right away. She couldn't retort and gripped Saito's clothes even more tightly to gain support she needed although her husband did nothing. But then she remembered that she must be strong to face any kind of situations. She was a survivor, after all.

She inhaled and exhaled a few times before saying, "My parents never mentioned, even once, that I have a brother..."

Kaoru laughed a little, "Of course they didn't. You know... They threw me away when I was a baby under Nagumo family's care."

"But why..."

"Simply because I'm not a rare female oni."

A hint of hatred was shown in Kaoru's eyes as he stated that sentence, and Chizuru couldn't help but feeling guilty.

"You've already seen my face, which is identical to yours. But I have one more proof." Kaoru took out a sword from his belt, "This katana and your kodachi is one pair. See? Even the design is the same."

Unconsciously, Chizuru nodded. It was right. There was no doubt this man was her long-lost brother. And before she knew it, pearls of tears had fallen from the corners of her eyes. What a relief to know that she still had a living blood-relative, although she had many, many questions to ask.

"Chizuru..." Kaoru slowly spread his arms, as if he was longing for something dear, "Come here, I want to see and hold my sister."

"Brother..." Chizuru smiled, a genuine smile. After a lot of difficult times, she wanted to share the stories with him. How their

parents died, how she planned to avenge them, how she ended up in Shinsengumi headquarters, how she was forced into an arranged marriage, how terrible the marriage was...yet only at first before she fell in love for real...

However before she took a single step, Saito had stopped her, "Stay with me, Chizuru... Something's suspicious here."

Chizuru shifted her gaze up at her husband, not understanding a thing now her mind had been blurred with happiness, "W-What do you mean, Hajime-san? That's my brother over there..."

"Yes, with three demons who are also our enemies," said Saito with steel in his tone.

Kaoru talked back to Saito, "If by 'enemies' you mean Satcho, then we demons have severed our ties with those humans. There's no reason for you anymore to forbid me seeing my own sister. Moreover, we can't leave her under your care, murderer."

Again, this 'murderer' thing..., which made Saito's expression more stern than before.

Laughing, Kazama joined the conversation, "People said that Saito Hajime from Shinsengumi is emotionless killing machine... But right now he seems panic to me."

"...I don't know what you're talking about," Saito glared at Kazama. "And I don't care whether you're a part of Satcho or not... I won't let you take my wife, who is under the protection of Shinsengumi!"

As the young captain finished his sentence, Kazama laughed maniacally, waking the other captains up. It was quite a rare sight, the Wolves of Mibu in their sleeping attire holding weapons— except Saito who held nothing. Had it been a normal situation, Chizuru would have laughed too.

"I see the sidekicks are here, too," Shiranui chuckled as he loaded his gun. "Then let me and Amagiri take care of them so you can continue your \_very important\_ conversation."

"No, let them be," Kazama motioned his hand to his subordinates, telling them in silence to stay still. "I want them to hear what Nagumo Kaoru has to say about Saito as well. That would be interesting..."

Kaoru bowed, "You're most kind, My Lord."

The captains of Shinsengumi looked as confused as Chizuru now. Silence descended upon them until Hijikata asked his most loyal subordinate, "What does he mean, Saito? What is happening here?"

But no answer was given...

"Afraid of telling the truth, huh?" Kaoru chuckled, then he continued, "Let's see... How about we shorten the story and say that one of Shinsengumi captains has killed two pureblood oni and took their only daughter as his bride by force while pretending he knows nothing about that tragedy?"

Saito clenched his hands into fists, "Don't listen to him, everyone..." His deep cerulean eyes bore pure hatred as he glared at Kaoru, "...and Chizuru, stay near me."

However, the small hands that gripped tightly onto his clothes were not there anymore. Saito looked behind and found the girl, looking at him as though he was a monster or something scary.

The memories of that violent night played themselves in Chizuru's mind once more... Her dead parents, blood, fire, and...

... A shadowy figure holding a bloody katana with his left hand.

"Chizuru...?"

"...No..."

"Chizuru...listen to me..."

In an instant, Kaoru appeared between them. In his hand was Chizuru's short sword. He took his sister's shaking hand and placed the kodachi on her palm.

"You know what to do, don't you? I don't think I have to explain the details," Kaoru cupped Chizuru's cheek, swallowing some tears.

This was too cruel...

"...Hajime-san...", Chizuru sobbed in Kaoru's embrace, "Please tell me it's not true... You're not the person I saw that night, aren't you? You're not the one who murdered my parents, right?"

"Of course he's not!" Chizuru could hear Heisuke's voice from far, very far away... "Lord Aizu never gave us such order! Right, Hajime-kun?"

Yet still, Saito was just standing there, glaring at Kaoru without saying anything.

Hijikata spoke out, "Saito... Just say that you didn't do it. We know it's the truth." Narrowing his amethyst eyes, he stared at Kazama, "These demons are really something. They've gone too far by spreading false rumor-"

"It's the truth."

Suddenly, silence enveloped all of them. There was no wind either that could soothe the maiden's broken heart even just for a tiny bit. She covered her mouth with both hands, still holding her beloved kodachi. The captains' eyes widened in disbelief, and the demons laughed, a winner's laugh.

"...Hajime-san..."

"I killed your parents, Chizuru."

Kaoru smiled and let Chizuru go from his embrace. The girl took one step closer to her husband, only to ask 'Why?' Though her tongue had



betrayed her.

"Saito! This is no time for a joke!" Harada exclaimed. "Why did you say something like that? You scared Chizuru off!"

"I'm not joking."

Their eyes met. The strong, determined sapphire and the frail, watery amber. Upon hearing Saito's statement, Chizuru wanted to scream at the top of her lungs that he was wrong and deny everything with every fiber of her being.

"...That was my first time since I joined Shinsengumi, that I killed neutral people, who belonged to neither Aizu or Satcho."

\* \* \*

><p><em>...Then why...<em>

\* \* \*

><p>"And I'm really sorry for that."<p>

\* \* \*

><p><em>Sorry? Is that all you can say?<em>

\* \* \*

><p>That deep voice, that cold tone...the one coming from the same lips that gave her a gentle kiss not too long ago, was now revealing the truth she didn't want to hear.<p>

However, this was reality. Not some fairytale when happily ever after was guaranteed.

Chizuru lifted her kodachi and was about to unsheathe it when a strong arm gripped her hand and prevented her from doing so.

"It's no use, Chizuru...", said Saito. "Even though I'm unarmed, I doubt you can hurt me."

\* \* \*

><p><em>A pure woman like you...<em>

\* \* \*

><p><em>You're right, Hajime-san... I can't kill you...<em>

\* \* \*

><p><em>Oh no, I made her cry again...<em>

\* \* \*

><p><em>Please, could someone say this is a dream? A very bad and long dream... How could I fall in love with my parents' murderer?<em>

\* \* \*

><p><em>Chizuru, I'm very sorry... But I must do this.<em>

\* \* \*

><p><em>Hajime-san... No... Saito Hajime of Shinsengumi, I...<em>

\* \* \*

><p>It was all too much for Chizuru that she abruptly lost consciousness, only to be caught in Kaoru's embrace once again. Meanwhile, Kazama seemed to enjoy the drama that just happened before his ruby eyes.<p>

"Quite amusing, wasn't it?" A smirk played on the oni's lips. "So you've been lying to her this whole time. No wonder you couldn't bring yourself to touch her."

For the rest of Shinsengumi's captains, it all made sense now that the oni came here. So Saito really hadn't touched Chizuru's body. Yet to think that Saito was also the culprit who killed her parents... It was too unbelievable.

"I've had enough of this nonsense!" Okita drew his sword with killing intent. "Die, you damned demons!"

He rushed toward Kazama. Unsurprisingly, the demon avoided the attack easily and with rapid movement, he came to where Saito, Chizuru, and Kaoru were, "Thanks to your confession, Saito. Don't worry, this girl will get a better husband."

"As if I will let you take her so easily! I might be the person who has stolen her happiness, but I have an honor as a Shinsengumi warrior! This woman is under our protection!" Saito shouted as he was about to hit the demon king.

Kazama avoided Saito's punch, "You called 'lying' as 'protection'? Don't make me laugh!" He landed a powerful kick in Saito's stomach, making the samurai cough up some blood. As though he wasn't satisfied yet, he gripped a fistful of Saito's violet hair and sent him flying with brute force of oni.

Saito could hear swords clashing from a far... That must be his comrades fighting Amagiri and Shiranui... He tried so hard not to lose consciousness. He wouldn't let Chizuru be taken away so easily.

As he made an attempt to get up, Kaoru had stomped on his head. Saito twitched in agony but the demon didn't seem to care. Slowly, Kaoru knelt down and whispered to Saito, "Brother-in-law, you look pathetic, you know..."

Kaoru stopped talking for a while and scanned his surroundings, "See your wounded comrades over there? Looks like they aren't even worthy to be Amagiri's and Shiranui's playthings."

"...And when I marry Yukimura Chizuru...", all of a sudden, Kazama appeared. "We will create a more powerful, pureblood oni you've never seen before!"

Although he was in pain and barely can move, Saito's eyes were still full of determination and fighting spirit. Upon seeing this, the demon lord sighed and gestured his hand, telling his underlings that it was time to leave.

"I've got what I wanted. Let's leave this stinky place!"

Amagiri, Shiranui, and Kaoru nodded. But as Kaoru stood up, Saito's arm grabbed one of his legs.

"Let...her...go," Saito breathed out heavily.

"Don't touch me, you filthy human!" Kaoru kicked Saito with his other leg many times until finally the purple-haired man's arm betrayed his owner. The pain was unimaginable.

"Tsk! How disgusting..." Kaoru rushed forward to Kazama's side, with the still unconscious Chizuru in his arms.

One second later, they were gone.

\* \* \*

><p>In the morning, the Shinsengumi mansion was busier than usual. All captains were wounded but at least they could still stand up and according to the doctor, they would heal quickly as long as they rested properly.<p>

Yet still...

"Captain Saito! No! Not with that body!" Yamazaki prevented Saito from going out of his room. Saito had taken some serious damage and his condition was far worse than the others.

"I have to...take Chizuru back...It's all my fault," Saito made a futile attempt to stand up. Sweat glistening on his face and body as he used his katana to help him walk.

Yamazaki let out a long sigh, "We don't even know where the demons are..."

"..."

"Just rest anyway, okay?"

A bitter smile forming on Saito's lips. His friends didn't need to know the whole story, did they?

\* \* \*

><p><em>The night before...<em>

\_As he made an attempt to get up, Kaoru had stomped on his head. Saito twitched in agony but the demon didn't seem to care. Slowly, Kaoru knelt down and whispered to Saito, "Brother-in-law, you look pathetic, you know..."\_

\_"...that I'm grateful you covered up for me. You just couldn't say that her only living relative is the murderer of her parents, right?"

So... you love her that much, taking all the blames on yourself and risking your own life? Well, I really can't say that you're not involved in this case yourself, though...We met that night, after all."\_

\_Saito didn't have any strength left to answer and he knew he was about to lose consciousness. While in this condition, he could still hear Kaoru's challenging voice.\_

\_"Meet us tomorrow at the hour of the boar. You must know the location, right? If you choose to stay with Shinsengumi and continue your life as usual\_â€" \_patrolling and protecting the citizens of Kyoto\_â€" \_then fine. But if you want to take Chizuru back, you have to face us. Please remember that you could lose your life anytime if you choose the latter."\_

\* \* \*

><p>The sun quickly turned into moon once again as the captain of Shinsengumi's third division laying motionlessly on his bed. He had gotten a bad fever from his wounds, yet he kept saying that he must go.<p>

"Saito...", Kondou, who only got scratches from the fight the night before, sat beside the young male, "I know that you're worried about Chizuru, butâ€"

"Commander, please...", Saito cut Kondou's speech. His voice was hoarse, as breathing was already difficult. "It's my fault... We were entrusted to protect Chizuru, and I couldn't accomplish such a simple task..."

He coughed, spitting some amount of blood. It looked like Kazama's attack had left a great impact on his inside... Between blurred images, he could hear Kondou exiting his room and calling for doctor. But after that... What were those scary voices that followed?

Only one answer crossed his mindâ€" Rasetsu.

Someone had broken the warehouse where Kodo's test subjects were kept and released the rasetsu. It didn't take a genius to read the situation as the culprit entered his room all of a sudden.

"Hello again, brother-in-law," Kaoru greeted Saito mockingly."You didn't show up so I was a bit worried... Glad to know you're still alive."

"Where is... Chizuru?" asked Saito weakly as he forced his body into sitting position.

Kaoru sighed, "She's with Kazama-sama now. Still in great shock, but she will calm down eventually. If you want to meet her that much, why don't you just take this?"

Smirking, Kaoru took out a glass vial with sparkling crimson liquid inside from his inner pocket, "You can't see my sister with such broken body, can you?"

The ochimizu. The 'water of life.' Right in front of his eyes.

By drinking it, the wounds would heal in seconds, the strength would be multiplied. Yet it also came with risks such as sucking the life force out of oneself and driving people insane.

Saito closed his eyes, "You...are planning to make me lose sanity?"

"Oh, of course not!" Kaoru exclaimed happily, making Saito feel disgust. "This is the improved version of ochimizu. I just stole it from Uncle Kodo's laboratory, and I've seen some rasetsu who are able to maintain their sanity as I released them."

Saito knew this very well. Kaoru wasn't lying. As long as he could control his emotions...

In a careful and slow pace, Saito took the vial from Kaoru's hand and observed it closely. This was not an era where you could fight with just honor any longer, and as bad as it sounded, something cheating like this was necessary.

"The decision is now yours to make, Saito Hajime."

"I know...", The lid was opened.

"...and this is my answer."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Hurrah for cliffhanger! What will happen next?! O\_O Do you really want to know? Then feed me with REVIEWS hahaha  
\*kicked\*<strong>

\*\*Ahem... thank you for reading and see you soon!\*\*

End  
file.